The Learners of British Columbia

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Ronald Marx, Tarrance Grieve

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Vivian Rossner

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Acknowledgements

Royal Commissions on Education are rare events in British Columbia, occurring at best about once in a generation. They are opportunities for British Columbians to think deeply about one of the most important investments that we make in our society. There is no other social institution that has as profound and lasting an influence on virtually everyone as does education and the organization responsible for its achievement, the school. Through education our citizens hope to realize their dreams and their aspirations. And through education we secure for future generations the traditions of an open and democratic society. For some, their years in school are remembered as times of adventure, of challenge, and of achievement. For others, these years are remembered as times of isolation, ridicule, and failure. Our ideals are that all of our children will grow to cherish the first kind of memories, yet we know all too well that many will experience the second.

The last decade or so has been witness to much conflict over education in British Columbia. In our travels through the province while conducting the research reported in this volume, we heard time and again the call for a rapprochement. Such a long and protracted conflict is both frustrating and exhausting. But after years of dispute, it seems as though there is little common ground on which vested interest groups can meet and little shared perspective from which to begin discussion. It is also clear to most observers that the young people of British Columbia are the most vulnerable parties in this conflict.

We have been at work on this project for just about a year. It is a short time in which to investigate and portray important issues about the learners of British Columbia. There is much that we have had to leave out; much more that needs to be said. We have had to select for discussion those issues that we found most important and which, in our view, had the most potential to guide the Commissioner in the preparation of his report and illuminate the subsequent public debate. Perhaps that debate will provide the opportunity for the rapprochement for which so many have asked.

In the pages that follow, the reader will find much to disagree with. Hopefully there will be many points of agreement as well. We have tried to capture the main points of contentious issues and to portray them baldly. This is a document oriented to public policy debate; it is not a scholarly document filled with nuance and exhaustive argument.

We were fortunate to receive the assistance of many able British Columbians. We thank the Commissioner and his very capable staff for their guidance and assistance. Arthur Kratzmann, Terry McBurney, John Walsh, Jim Bowman, Pam Glass, Carmen Farrell-Collins, Mike Haberl, Julie Turner, Marianne Garay, and Michelle Livingston all provided enormous help as we rushed through our heavy research agenda. The Kamloops School Board was kind enough to allow Tarrance Grieve to work on this project, and the Delta School Board was equally kind regarding the services of Vivian Rossner. Thanks also go to Simon Fraser University for its willingness to release Ronald Marx to The Royal Commission research staff.

Our interviews with students throughout British Columbia was without doubt the most exciting part of our work. We are not free to mention the names of the schools or the students, but we thank them warmly. The six public schools and four independent schools in which we spent many hours gave us the opportunity to learn at first hand about the lives of our province's children and youth. All too often in social science research we settle for cool, dispassionate, and statistical accounts of our research participants. The research activities in which we report here contain the thrills and disappointments of real people, as we are sure you will agree after you read the profiles contained in Chapter 3.

We received early help in the planning of our research from Barry Anderson, Patrick Dickson, Dawn Howard, Penelope Peterson, Robert Rowe, Stan Shapson, Derek Sturko and Bernice Wong. We would like to thank Todd Rogers, Neil Sutherland, and Neil Smith for their advice in the design of the study and the analysis of

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Ronald Marx, Tarrance Grieve, Vivian Rossner
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The Learners of British Columbia: Summary and Highlights

Our work was undertaken from the point of view of the learner, not from the point of view of the teacher, parents, administrators, the public, or other important actors in the educational system of British Columbia. We began our work by drafting key questions based on several premises to guide our work. Also, prior to commencing our investigations, we identified basic assumptions about the learner that we held. As our work progressed, we returned to our initial questions and list of assumptions for the purposes of refinement, affirmation, and amendments in the light of our findings.

First, we presumed that the questions we posed would influence and be influenced by the work of the other five Commission research teams. We believe this presumption to have been correct. For example, our discussion of the nature of learning has relevance to the work undertaken by the curriculum group. Also, the results of our interviews of learners with differing backgrounds and from a variety of school settings relate to the deliberations of other research groups concerned with teacher education and the relationship of schools to society.

Second, we presumed that educational development occurs throughout the life span of the learner. Becoming educated is not something that happens only during the ages normally spanned by the K-12 period. Learners come to kindergarten with about five years of experience and they leave school, usually in late adolescence, with 60 or more years left in their lives. We believed it to be inappropriate to examine the role of schooling in British Columbia without reference to this developmental context.

Our third premise, related to the second, was that the educational development of the person occurs in the context of many social institutions and informal settings. While it is trite to say that many things in modern society influence children and youth, it is also profound. We believed it would be foolhardy for the Commission to ignore the powerful influences that other institutions and settings have on individual development. From television, radio, and other mass media, to family, church and organized sports, children and youth are presented with an enormous range of opportunities in which to learn. Many of the achievements that result from these influences complement and enhance the goals of schools, but many are in conflict with the mission of educational institutions.

Last, all of our questions possess an historical context. In order to plan for the future, we believed it was necessary to look to the past. This premise relates more to some of our questions than to others, yet we believed that an historical view would enable us to make realistic recommendations for the next quarter century and beyond.

The questions posed and the assumptions held by us are presented in the following lists.

Assumptions About the Learner

1. A highly educated public serves the common good.

2. The state has an obligation to ensure that all children have access to free, non-sectarian basic education.
   Basic education is to be defined by the lay public or its representatives.
   Parents must ensure that their children engage in basic education or its equivalent.
   Parents must ensure the state that their children have access to the state's basic education.

3. The school is the basic unit of education.
   Schools and all their components are primarily for provision of basic education for learners.
   Basic education should be common to all.
   Unequal distribution of resources is necessary to ensure equal opportunity.

4. The learner has the right to pursue individual interests beyond basic education.
   All learners must be helped to learn how to learn.
   To ensure the rights of the learner, financial restraints should be minimized, and quality care should be provided.

5. The evaluation system(s) used by the schools affect(s) the learner's approach to learning.
   Evaluation should encourage provision of specific information designed to foster improvement.
   Evaluation systems which simply sort and rank should be de-emphasized.

6. The learner is an active participant in the schooling process and has the responsibility for his or her own education.
   Learning is hard work. While learning can be enjoyable, to imply that learning should be effortless is to do a disservice to the learner.
   Individual differences are best met through the provision of options to the learner.
   Schools should be viewed as agencies that assist learners to attain an education. Learners should use schools as they achieve an education, not take full direction from them.
   Beyond the primary years, grouping of learners should be based on competence or achievement rather than on age-grade criteria.
   Learners should be able to develop themselves on a "broken front," that is, accelerate in areas of strength and go more slowly in areas of weakness.

7. Learners, once they have acquired the basic education, should pursue interests in a variety of institutions, only one of which may be the comprehensive senior secondary school as it now exists.
   All learners should be guaranteed a minimum number of years of free education beyond the basic education.
   Learners should be able to interrupt their education after they have met the basic requirements and return at any time in their later lives.

The Learner: Guiding Questions

1. Who are the learners of British Columbia? What are their family circumstances with respect to ethnicity, language of the home, family income, and family support? What do we know about their mobility, their aspirations, their use of time? How do they value education?

2. What should be the goals of education? What does it mean to be educated? What are the goals of the school system of British Columbia? What role should the schools play in the development of the person?

3. What are the fundamental skills that learners need in order to become educated? Should the goals be the same for all learners? What should be the mandate of the schools?

4. What is the ideal social contract or compact between the learner and the society? What are the rights and responsibilities of learners? What are the rights and responsibilities of society to learners?

5. What do we expect of learners? What are the appropriate standards? How should these standards be determined? What is the performance of the learners of British Columbia? What kinds and level of performance should we expect? Should we expect the same from all learners?

6. How do people learn? Do all people learn in the same way? What special needs are there that influence the way people learn? What implications are there for the answers to these questions to curriculum, methods of instruction, and evaluation of learners?

7. What are the appropriate conditions for learning to meet the goals of education under the constraints and possibilities derived from all of the above questions?

Our work included visits to ten schools where we interviewed 63 students and their parents; attendance of public hearings and subsequent reading of submissions made to the Commission to determine what presenters had to say and recommend about the learner; interviews of key players in the school system of British Columbia; analysis of data and documents provided, at our request, from the Ministry of Education; a review of pertinent literature and research findings; and consultation with experts and special interest groups concerned with the needs of learners. In all instances, we found people to be genuinely interested in the work of the Commission. They responded to our questions candidly and openly. They, like us, saw much about the current school system that is to be lauded and admired. Also like us, they would like to see improvements made to the present situation. Their contribution and cooperation is gratefully acknowledged.

Major Issues and Themes

As our work progressed, six major issues regarding the learner emerged. These issues cut across the questions we used to gather and organize our findings, and examples of each may be found in the various sections of this report. Following a brief discussion of these issues, we present our suggestions to the Commission. These are written at a general level; they do not specify concrete action to be taken immediately. We prefer that the reader spend the time to read all of our report, in which we discuss the justification for our suggestions. Each reader will, no doubt, arrive at somewhat different interpretations of the issues and the data that we present. Thus, rather than present definitive conclusions, our goal is to provoke discussion and debate about this most critical of all social institutions—education.

The first issue concerns the provision of comprehensive health and social services to children in British Columbia. Most educators are calling for a clear mandate for schools. Usually this means that they wish to be held accountable only for the educational and socialization functions of schools and that health and social service functions be the responsibility of other agencies. The problem comes when these educators are asked what to do about children who, in their eyes, are in need of additional social services in order to take advantage of the educational services provided by schools. Unfortunately, many of these children, although clearly suffering problems which impede their educational progress, are considered not to be in a crisis situation by social service and health agencies who perceive their mandate as being limited to crisis situations. However, no one wants to give up on the children. The major issue now is how can more comprehensive social services be provided for needy children without adding a fiscal burden to school budgets and at the same time addressing the very real issues concerning professional and bureaucratic turf protection.

Suggestion One

In order to enhance the education of youth, there is need to redefine the social compact between the state and the child in British Columbia. Such definition will require deliberate public debate about rights and responsibilities. Models for service delivery, such as those found in the reports to the Commission by the community working groups concerned with the role parents in education and with pre-school care and early childhood education should be considered. Regardless of the particular approach that is eventually taken on these issues, it is the government which must lead this debate.

The second issue, which has many ramifications, concerns the provision of choice to the learner. Conflict exists between the pressure for individual choice that reflects the pluralism of modern Canada and the need for a comprehensive public school system to create and maintain a sense of community. Independent schools provide options based on differing value perspectives while public schools enable social cohesion to be developed and maintained.

Conflicts regarding choice are frequently couched in terms of the demands of families versus the requirements of schools. But the choices of parents are not always accepted by children, particularly as they age. Policies regarding choice must protect the interests of children independently from the interests of parents, particularly when parent and child are in conflict. Furthermore, parents who choose to educate their children by means other than enrolling them

in schools that are supervised by the Ministry of Education should be held accountable for the education that these children receive.

Finally, with respect to choice, the secondary curriculum needs to address the wide range of needs and interests of adolescents. The current distinction between vocational and academic tracks is an inappropriate and misleading categorization. The critical issue is related to the lives of young adults after they leave high school. Virtually everyone in society expects that all adults will lead economically productive and independent lives. Thus the vocational preparation that all adolescents receive needs to be considered. The current secondary curriculum is far too heavily weighted toward university entrance. Those learners who choose other options consider themselves, and are perceived by others, to have failed at their efforts to succeed at an academically oriented curriculum. Courses other than those named as prerequisites by the universities are considered to be of less worth. Because fewer than 30% of the learners attempt university and fewer than 20% of the learners succeed in obtaining a degree, such distinctions are detrimental to the majority of learners.

Suggestion Two

British Columbia requires a common core curriculum designed to cultivate the minds of all students. This curriculum needs to be developed in association with instructional practices that will help achieve this goal. The elementary years should provide the basic capabilities in literacy and numeracy so that children can succeed at the common curriculum. The common curriculum should be required over the period currently devoted to the junior secondary years. All students should be required to take these courses in a non-age-graded system. We believe that the rigid use of age-grading in schools constitutes a serious limitation to innovation and to opportunities for the individual development of learners. Upon successful completion of the common curriculum, students should select a specialized curriculum oriented toward the immediate post-secondary years. For some, this curriculum will be oriented toward further academic preparation at a college or university. For others, the senior secondary years will be oriented toward specific vocational preparation. These courses of study will be developed and delivered collaboratively by schools, unions, and employers. Admission to either of the senior secondary programs should be based on successful completion of the common curriculum. It should not be based on grades or any other predetermined sorting mechanism.

The third issue concerns views of learning, and teaching in support of learning. Views of learning that are held by many educators in the schools of British Columbia are outdated. There is growing evidence, in fact almost universal acceptance, of the view of mind that places more reliance on the individual as a constructor of meaning than as a vessel into which to pour information. This constructivist approach to mind marks a dramatic departure from earlier approaches that were concerned either with the development of mental faculties or behavioural training. Teaching and instruction needs to reflect this change in philosophy of mind. As well, instructional practices need to reflect other changes in educational thought. In particular, the place of instructional models other than direct instruction, lecture, and recitation needs to be promoted.

There are a number of additional issues related to views of learning. First is the issue of class size. Alternatives to reductions in class size must be implemented. Use of differentiated staffing, new technology, cooperative learning models, peer tutoring, independent studies, and access to learning institutions other than traditional schools are worth exploring. Second is the issue of how to guarantee the acquisition of basic skills fundamental to further learning. The primary and elementary school mandate needs to be defined in such a way that basic skills are acquired. Enrichment and exploration should take place in this context. Third, provision should be made for a sandwiching of work with schooling. The learner who does not choose to pursue academic studies and who chooses to leave the school should have other options and should not be stigmatized. Last is the issue of evaluation and the effects on learning of the current system of normative, competitive grading practices. Such systems serve political purposes and function as a mechanism for screening for selection. They are not conducive to enhanced learning. A proper balance is required between these systems and systems which emphasize provision of guidance and direction leading to improved performance.

Suggestion Three

Teaching needs to address what learners already know about the subject matter they are learning as well as the way in which they think about that information. Learning is creating, it is not receiving. Teaching methods must help learners create knowledge and understanding. This cannot be done effectively by treating learners as passive vessels to be filled with knowledge, but it can be done effectively by requiring learners to work hard and think deeply about the topics to be learned, and to take risks in their work. It means teaching students the strategies for thinking about problems and their solutions as much as teaching them the solutions. It means that teaching methods must require that students be active, that they must talk and work together, that they must practise both the mental and the physical requirements of the tasks they are to perform. It means that they must ask questions just as much as answer them. They must provide resources and help for others just as much as they use resources and help provided by others, and they need to work in cooperative environments just as much as they work in competitive environments.

Fourth is the issue of standards. The evidence seems to indicate that the performance of the learners of British Columbia on selected measures over time, as judged by panels of educators and non-educators, compares well to other jurisdictions and that standards are not falling. Also, in the opinion of the judges, standards are satisfactory or better in most areas that have been measured. Yet, the public expresses a belief that standards are falling. Furthermore, the school does not appear to have a significant place in the lives of the learners who were interviewed. Certain programs mean a great deal to students, but overall they place schooling on a lower priority than what society might expect. How to bring about a change in valuing and priority without simply adding to the curriculum is the issue. Questions of organization, evaluation, homework, learning models, family expectations, and use of time are all relevant, as is the question of diversity. Should there be a common standard for all, or should there be a set of criteria which will be used to determine whether or not learners are being challenged? How does society compromise between the desire for excellence and the need to provide equity of access to knowledge and learning opportunities?

Suggestion Four

The solutions to complex problems concerning our expectations for our schools and the standards that they achieve cannot be simple. These solutions must attend to many masters. They must be able to provide a useful tool for the improvement of learning and teaching, provide a gate-keeping function, serve political agendas, provide information useful to school improvement efforts, and gain the confidence of the parents and community. The Ministry's information profile has considerable promise. An elimination of the provincial grade 12 examinations, an emphasis on classroom practices that use criterion-referenced evaluation, and the engagement of learners in such a way that they take the major responsibility for their learning would also help to restore confidence in the school system. Also, expression of faith and confidence in the public school system (which does and will continue to serve the majority of the pupils of British Columbia) and acknowledgement of the positive performance measures that have been gathered to date by the Government of the day will do much to restore confidence.

A fifth issue that emerged concerns the plight of those learners with special needs. The demands for "least restrictive environments" and opportunities to realize "full potential" for children with special needs place new pressures on schools. What are the effects of integrating the handicapped into regular schools and classrooms? What is the empirical base in support of the movement towards full integration? In particular, first, the gifted learner seems to require more resources and attention. Concern is with all levels of schooling, but especially with the secondary schools. Identification, funding, provision of a continuum of program options, and quality instruction have been identified as concerns. Second, those learners with learning disabilities are not well served by the present system. On the surface the issues seem to ones of definition and early identification. However, provision of truly effective programs for these learners seems more fundamental. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the approaches currently used is in order.

Next, non-academic learners (those who are not bound for college or university) perceive themselves as being of less worth than are the academic students. Few children enter non-academic programs by choice. They fail into these programs. A large number of non-academic students leave school without success and with little of relevance to their life's work. The resources of society are provided in greater measure to those who remain in school and who enrol in

academic courses leading to the university. Yet, non-academic learners need, even more than do the college- or university-bound, a solid, general education that will equip them to learn and to participate fully in society. Early specialization for any learner would be a mistake. All learners require both vocational and academic education. Last, with respect to special needs, is the issue as to whether or not enough investment is being made by society to support learners who are new Canadians, and learners who are disadvantaged —both culturally and economically. Assuming that more investment is required so that these learners can take advantage of what schools have to offer, how can society best make such an investment? How can the sanctity of the family be upheld while guaranteeing the rights of the learner? Provision of child care, preschool and parent education programs are considerations.

Suggestion Five

Over the last two decades British Columbia has made great strides in the provision of extra assistance to special needs learners. The policy of providing this extra assistance should be continued. Focus for the future should be toward providing educational support services for both learners and teachers in normalized settings. Where necessary, special needs learners and their families should receive extended services designed to provide the learner with the necessary capabilities to success in school. Particular attention should be given to programs for Native, English as a Second Language, and the Severely Learning Disabled pupils.

The last issue to emerge concerns matters related to rights and responsibilities. All actors who play a role in the education of children have rights and responsibilities. They include professional educators and families. Pupils have mandatory access to education, but they also have responsibilities to perform in order to secure and maintain this access. Parents express a sense of powerlessness, and learners appear to have no legislated rights, at least as reflected in the School Act and its Regulations. Interpretation of the Canadian Charter of Rights will likely define rights of the learner.

Parents cite instances where they have been stonewalled by the system. They want to know what their rights are and to whom they can turn when things do not go as they feel they should have gone. The natural tension between the home, which sees all things from the perspective of looking after a child's individual needs, and the school, which sees all things from the perspective of the child's responsibilities to the group, is at issue. How can parents be given a sense of fairness in this natural struggle without placing the school in a position of powerlessness? Finally, and perhaps more important, who will be the advocate of the learner when conflict arises?

Suggestion Six

We believe that carefully thought out changes to the British Columbia School Act and its regulations are needed to bring about desired and proper changes to school practices so that they reflect "chartered" rights. To us, legislated change is a better way to address those concerns that have merit than are rulings resulting from costly court proceedings. We believe that it is far better to allow, indeed to require protagonists in a controversy to settle their dispute among themselves at a local level. Dispute resolution should include clearly specified opportunities for appeal to dispassionate but interested parties. Turning to the courts for resolution of important educational questions might have to occur at times, but only in rare circumstances. We prefer not to run the risk of resolving disputes by appeal to procedural technicalities rather than substance. Consideration should be given to the establishment by legislation of a third party conflict resolution procedure for education, perhaps through the provision of an Ombudsman for children, and of clarification of the mandate and authority of the various agencies which serve the children of British Columbia.

Summary and Highlights of the Report

In preparing this report on education and schooling in British Columbia from the perspective of the learner, we recognized the need to present an analysis of the data we collected as completely and objectively as we could, but in such a manner that the reader could understand the context of our findings. Accordingly, we have prepared nine chapters by which we hope to provide the supportive rationale that underlies our suggestions to the Commissioner. The papers

have been organized into two sections; one contains chapters concerning our statistical and interview data (Chapters 1 to 4), and one contains chapters concerning issues and ideas derived from the data in section one as well as from the literature in education (Chapters 5 to 9). Suggestions arising from all discussion papers are presented in Chapter 10. A summary of the highlights of each chapter follows.

Our first chapter provides the reader with a detailed analysis of what the submissions to the Commission say about the learner. The submissions make very few direct criticisms of the public school system. Those criticisms that are made concern the lack of modern equipment, poor standards, lack of specialist teachers, the tendency to stress the rights of learners rather than their responsibilities, lack of parent rights, and the lack of programs for the gifted and the learning disabled.

The greatest number of recommendations made regarding the learner were made by parents followed by teachers, then by the public, trustees and lastly students. The greatest number of recommendations for all groups concern the goals or purposes of schooling. It is impossible to portray the tone and the strength of argument contained in the more than 2,000 submissions made to the Commission. Ideally, people should read the submissions and draw their own conclusions about the messages they contain. Only then will they develop an appreciation for the eloquence displayed, the depth of understanding, and the strength of conviction held by many of the presenters. Not all that has been recommended will be done. All recommendations have, however, been given consideration by the Commission.

Our second chapter concerns data about enrolments, societal trends, schools, and programs. Schools have been and will be expected to play a large role in preparing the learner for the future. They have access to the learner for only 3% of the learner's awake lifetime, yet they will be and are currently being judged for the extent to which they are successful at providing British Columbians with a strong basic education.

The education system is expected to serve all learners between the age of 5 and 16. The current enrolment is about 500,000 students and projections indicate that enrolments will grow for the next decade. A variety of schools provide educational programs for these half million students, although the majority are public schools. Well over 90% of all pupils attend public schools including almost the entire special-needs learner population. To meet the requirements of a basic education, all funded schools offer prescribed and authorized programs. A number of locally developed programs and many electives are also provided, supposedly to meet the variety of learners' needs and to satisfy the expectations of parents and communities.

The data suggest that the percentage of families in British Columbia with the capability to provide their children with strong environments to support school learning is on the decline. This is a result of societal changes such as entry of women into the work force, family breakups, decline in church attendance, mobility, and isolation of children from the extended family. The likelihood that a significant number of learners have not enjoyed supportive preschool years and out-of-school experiences that are conducive to achievement in school is increasing. We must address the needs of this minority of learners who require an inordinate amount of time and energy of their teachers and who require family support and health and social services from other agencies. However, although the societal data indicate trends and family characteristics that may be detrimental to a significant number of learners, policy makers must keep in mind that the vast majority of learners, no matter what the nature of their family, are provided with family situations that are conducive to success in schooling.

What is of concern to the Commission, then, is the common and apparently supportable claim that parental poverty, family instability, and low social status tend to lead children to fail at school, which in turn limits their own adult occupational status and ability to provide quality family life for their children. The issue is, should the state intervene in an attempt to break life cycles of social disability leading to educational failure and followed by social disability? If the state should do so, under what circumstances and by what procedures? Central to this issue is the tension between respect for family privacy and parent rights and concern for the victims of social forces detrimental to family health. The 'best interest' of the learner, although not always easy to determine, must guide policy makers in their consideration of increasing requests for daycare, preschool, afterschool care, family support, and meal programs.

Concern needs to be given to those learners who drop out or withdraw, students who will possess no educational credential. At present, status tends to be conferred on the academically successful, and it is they who will attend university and obtain a degree. A degree, which brings status and reward,is seen to provide a ticket to more desirable jobs and

lifestyles. Parents, teachers, and peers reinforce the goal of attaining a degree and to strive for less is to admit failure. Yet only 30% or more of the learners of British Columbia will attend colleges and universities and only 19% of them will obtain a degree. College and university are not the answer for the approximately 70% of the students who do not go on to study after they leave high school. These learners, when young, often share the same goal as those who do go on to post-secondary studies. But they fall behind as they get streamed into basic or non-academic programs. What then becomes of their goals? What do they see for their future?

We must find ways to give these young people something to strive for. Work study programs, co-op programs and other such programs are all useful, but they will not be enough. We need a clearer vision as to what should be the goals of the education system of British Columbia. We need to develop positions in the work place to which the young may aspire. We need to assist families to provide the necessary nurture without making these families dependent upon the state. We need to create new school programs for the non-academic that will be seen to be valuable in their own right, not simply a second-best alternative for those who fail to gain what is seen to be more worthwhile. Parents, teachers, employers and learners all need to reassess what education is all about and where the schools fit into that vision.

The third paper comprises eight profiles of learners who represent various sectors of the learner community in British Columbia. Each profile is a composite of learners with similar background attributes. The profiles are based on the results of interviews of 63 students and their parents. Each interview was an hour and a half to two hours in length. In the interviews, the students were asked to describe a typical day, and were encouraged to talk about their school work, their friends, and their lives in general. School records and teacher comments provided further information about these students.

The eight profiles were based on the following groups.

Indigenous Canadians

These learners are the Native students in the system. Most of these learners live on reserves in large families. Alcohol and drugs has affected many of their lives in some way and family role models tend to be unemployed. They are behind their age group in school and are not likely to graduate except from alternate programs. They have confidence in their future, but one wonders if they will be successful given the circumstances of their lives and the apparent inability of the schools to make a difference for these people.

Heritage Canadians

These learners come from non-visible minority families which have been in Canada for three or more generations. The high advantage learners in this group take much for granted. They have strong supportive families and they believe that their good fortune is the result of talent rather than luck. These learners, for the most part, do well in school, although they are seldom challenged or captured by their studies. Most have aspirations to complete at least one degree as they see the link between success in school and financial success. These learners belong and find the school to be a social haven, a secure place in which they can develop socially.

The low advantage learners in this group are described in the profiles as being at war with the school system. They come from families characterized as broken, low in education, and who view school as an impediment to life. They see little value in any program that is not directly linked to gaining employment. These learners engage in anti-social behaviour and they are irritants to the school system. Yet for some there is a plea for assistance to break out of their life cycle.

Visible Minority

These learners may have been born in Canada themselves, but their parents emigrated here. They are visibly different from the majority of learners in their age group. The high-advantaged, visible minority students are children of parents who emigrated to Canada years ago. These learners see their parents working long hours so that they can have advantage and obtain a good education leading to preferred professional jobs. These students tend to be academically capable and they also excel in the arts or athletics, or both. To achieve other than "A" status is to be a failure. They experience conflict between meeting the expectations of their parents and joining in with the more socially conscious heritage Canadians.

The visible minority, low advantaged learners have experienced much upset in their lives. They have not experienced life circumstances that enable them to succeed in school. They have ability but they have accepted goals which include completion of high school followed by work in relatively non-skilled jobs. They are often socially excluded and are loners.

New Canadians

These learners have themselves been immigrants to Canada. The high-advantaged new Canadian learners share the hopes of their families: that is, to make a better life in a new land. Their parents are often professionals who are unable to practice their profession in Canada due to language difficulties or non-recognition of their credentials. These learners believe that they must attain professional status. They are highly aware of the sacrifice their family has made on their behalf and they are very responsible towards their studies. Studies come first, followed by work to assist the family. These learners typically put aside leisure time in favour of studies and or work with the belief that if they are successful in gaining professional status, they will be able to relax and enjoy life.

The low-advantaged new Canadians are concerned mainly about money. They and their families are dedicated to saving money to assist others of their family to emigrate to Canada. These learners also act as interpreters for their parents who because of their work situation will not likely master the English language. Many of these learners have experienced war, or famine, or extreme deprivation. They are unlikely to have a childhood as we know it. They are serious about life and mean to succeed and thus help their parents realize the hopes for coming to Canada.

Independent School Students

These learners attend non-public schools selected by their parents for their particular philosophy, often religious, and for their approach to education. These learners represent a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. Some are enrolled in schools established to help the learner with a disability, others are attending schools based on religious doctrine, while others attend schools for the academic and social elite. Some are successful, others are not, yet all see their independent school setting as preferable to the public school system.

As can be seen above, all profiles are simplified outlines of dominant patterns. Individual differences are not highlighted, in the interests of creating a "type" of learner whose values, needs and views can be recognized as distinct from the values, view and needs of other groups of learners.

The fourth chapter in our report presents an analysis of the themes in the lives of the learners of British Columbia as represented in the student interview data. In this chapter we present what the learners told us about teaching and how they learn, their goals in life, their relationships with adults and peers, their responsibilities, and their use of time. Analysis of these themes indicate that there are many differences between the types of learners as described in the profiles (based on ethnicity and educational advantage) as well as between urban and rural students, and between females and males. It is obvious from this analysis, along with the portrayal of students in the profiles described in Chapter 3, that our students have many firmly held opinions and beliefs about what school means to them and how school contributes to their lives. Many of these opinions are cause for reconsidering the impact that school might have

on these learners. We believe that all recommendations for change to the schools of British Columbia should be made with an understanding of how the lives of the learners will be affected.

Our fifth chapter summarizes our analysis of the submissions to the Commission, the descriptions of the students, programs, and enrolments in the Province's schools, and the data from our interviews. We next turn to an elaboration of some of the educational issues that derive from those data.

Chapter 6 is entitled *Clarifying the Vision: The Goals of Education*. In this chapter we clarify what we believe to be the goals of education and the functions of schooling. Education and schooling are not identical concepts. Education is both a process and a state. It is a process in the sense that educated people possess the capability to learn by themselves. It is a state in the sense that educated people possess knowledge and understanding about the world and humanity. We articulate four goals of education: cultivation of mind; preparation for economic participation and vocational development; the development of moral responsibility; and the development of the person as an individual. Schooling is a social enterprise that has taken on many functions, indeed far more than it is capable of achieving successfully. While there are currently in British Columbia, as elsewhere, many functions of schooling, we believe that there are three functions that are necessary for the British Columbia school system to fulfill: provide the foundations of an education upon which people can build a lifetime of learning; socialization of children to the norms and values of their society; and custodial care of children and youth.

Our seventh chapter addresses the issues related to rights and responsibilities. To us the matter of rights is more than ensuring that all students are aware of their rights both as citizens and as students. Rather, the "welfare" rights of the child lead us to recommend that better coordination and delivery of social and health services be undertaken. Two models seem feasible. The first is to extend the mandate of the school and to provide the school with the necessary resources. The other is to establish a means by which the efforts of the appropriate agencies are efficiently and effectively coordinated. We prefer the latter and suggest that there be legislation to establish mandates and authority and to provide children with the protection of an advocate or ombudsman.

In our discussion of responsibilities, we highlight the conundrum in which schools are caught. For some parents and students, schools are too lax in their enforcement of rules that dictate to learners their responsibilities toward the school, teachers, peers, and themselves. For others, schools are seen as dictatorial, imposing arbitrary rules on powerless but sometimes resisting children. The school must navigate the difficult waters between these two views of learners' responsibilities. The danger is that in efforts to avoid the shoals in these treacherous waters, the schools become havens of arbitrary relativism. Nonetheless, schools have a role to play in the development of the character of our young, in helping to engender the sense of moral responsibility and courage coupled with a commitment to working and living in society that is necessary for the maintenance of social order.

The eighth chapter in our report addresses the issues underlying learning and teaching. In this paper we focus on the heart of the work of school. To us the evidence is clear. Learning is hard work. It can be fun, but it cannot, it ought not always be easy. Furthermore, we now know more about how people learn. Put simply, people learn by trying to make sense of the world by relating what they are learning to something they already know. There are many ways in which people try to make sense of the world when they learn. What is clear, however, is that the more systematically one approaches the learning of something new, the more successful one will be. These "learning strategies" can be taught and once learners use them they can become more successful. Skill should not be divorced from content, and learning, though individualistic, is often accomplished best in group settings.

Teachers are the people who are ultimately responsible for the success of schools. We believe that the vast majority of teachers are dedicated professionals working for the benefit of their students. Nonetheless, we also think that more innovation is necessary in the way in which instruction is developed and presented to learners. Many existing procedures are in urgent need of change. For example, procedures such as streaming or tracking, although used often in our schools, are not supported by research findings. The literature provides us with convincing evidence and arguments for heterogeneous or mixed ability grouping as well as for integrated or normalized education for the handicapped. Teachers must adopt methods of instruction that are compatible with what we know about learning from the research findings that have amassed in recent years. We believe that we can enhance the quality of teaching in our schools by providing more autonomy to teachers with respect to professional matters and by supporting their autonomy through local decision making about curriculum and through sustained in-service education.

Our ninth chapter addresses the matter of standards and accountability. To us, there appears to be ample evidence that the schools of British Columbia have been able, until recently, to adopt acceptable compromises to what seem to be dichotomous issues related to a choice between concerns for the alienation of youth, the lack of diversity in the educational system, the need for all learners to have certain basic competencies, the need to develop citizenship, and the need to be assisted with the transition to adulthood versus concerns with the efficient use of resources based on a utilitarian model and the sorting and ranking of learners by means of competition. The ever present dilemma of how to provide for both equity and excellence and the related debate about standards appear to be prominent once again. Two major influences on standards are the curriculum that is required and the method of evaluation that is emphasized.

Mass secondary education, the need to provide a place for all learners, a greater diversity of course offerings, a scarcity of resources, and rising teacher militancy and instability have resulted in perceived disparities in achievement that have led to a renewed interest in restoring uniform standards. However, the growing diversity of entrance requirements of post-secondary institutions (access to which every pupil aspires even though fewer than 30% proceed into these institutions) have imposed on secondary schools to the degree that the schools can no longer provide a common sequential background of preparation for further studies. Assessment programs serving both instructional improvement and political purposes and demonstrating that the Ministry of Education has a concern for maintaining some degree of uniformity of standards have been developed and refined. However, these assessment programs have resulted in unanticipated negative consequences on the nature of classroom teaching. Despite results that indicate there is a general level of satisfaction with academic standards, and that standards on selected measures have not declined, there is a call by many for higher and more uniform standards across local school districts and the province. We are left with a situation where the tests become the master to the teachers and learners. In a time when flexible, creative thinking is what we want to foster in our students, we hold as our standards of excellence the exact opposite.

Our extensive interviews of pupils in grades 3 to 12 and attending both public and independent schools, and their parents, indicate that, typically, the learners of British Columbia are not highly motivated to work at what they do not like. It is the unfortunate situation that school all too often fits into this category. By and large these pupils, despite their differing records of school achievement and future aspirations, convey the message that there is not sufficient challenge in the tasks they are asked to take on by their teachers. By this, they seem to mean both that they find the tasks irrelevant to their lives and that the nature of the learning and teaching activities fails to stir them to have a greater interest. They comment that there is too much "copy work" and that the teacher "goes on and on," and that the work does not require that they really apply themselves in a challenging way.

Yet many of these learners have deep, captivating interests in other areas such as music or sports, some having worked at these vocations for several hours a day for several years. It seems then, that these learners are capable of applying themselves to those learning activities for which they see a direct relationship between the activity and some personal aspiration. School does not seem to occupy a central place in the learner's life; rather, it is something that has to be fitted into otherwise very busy lives. These findings are, of course, generalizations for which there are many exceptions as most of the learners interviewed did cite instances where they were caught up in their learning, usually as a result of a closer match between the tasks assigned at school and a personal interest, or because a particular teacher had captured their interest by some instructional method.

The solutions to complex problems concerning our expectations for our schools and the standards that they achieve cannot be simple. These solutions must attend to many masters. They must be able to provide a useful tool for the improvement of learning and teaching, provide a gate-keeping function, serve political agendas, provide information useful to school improvement efforts, and gain the confidence of the parents and community. The Ministry's information profile has considerable promise. An elimination of the provincial examinations, an emphasis on classroom practices that use criterion-referenced evaluation, and the engagement of learners in such a way that they take the major responsibility for their learning would also help to restore confidence in the school system. Also, expression of faith and confidence in the public school system (which does and will continue to serve the majority of the pupils of British Columbia) and acknowledgement of the positive performance measures that have been collected can do much to restore confidence.

These, then, are the highlights of the chapters on data and issues. The suggestions arising from our work are presented in Chapter 10 of this report.

We hope that, before considering these suggestions in detail, the reader will take time to read the full report and thus come to understand our basis for them. To us, this understanding is more important in some respects than the suggestions themselves. Also we accept the likelihood that on reading our discussion of education and schooling of learners in British Columbia, the reader may arrive at conclusions that differ from, but are just as defensible as ours. If such occurs we will be satisfied that we have done our job, which was to cause others to view the school system from the perspective of the most important actor —the learner.

1. The Learner: What The Submissions Say

This chapter presents an analysis of recommendations made about the learner in the submissions presented to the Commission. Its purpose is to provide insights into what concerns about the learner were addressed most frequently and by whom —students, parents, teachers, trustees and the public.

The data reported in this chapter were obtained by reading approximately 1400 submissions, and tallying, by source and category, all recommendations that directly concerned the learner. Categories used were: goals; standards, evaluation and grading; teaching methods; learning conditions; special needs pupils; Native Peoples; organization of schools and schooling; expansion of services provided; and parental involvement. Only 797 of the submissions that were read contain recommendations which directly pertain to the learner. In all, 1,428 such recommendations have been tallied. It should be noted that most of the 797 submissions contain more than one recommendation regarding the learner, and also that these submissions typically contain recommendations related to other areas of interest to the Commissioner such as personnel, finance, governance, and society. The source of the 797 submissions that relate directly to the learner was as follows:

Parents	320
Public	199
Teachers	166
Trustees	81
Students	29
Total:	797

Table 1 presents, by source and area of concern, the tally of recommendations pertaining to the learner. *Tables 2* to *10* present, for each area of concern, a tally of specific recommendations organized by source and listed in order of frequency. Whenever the source of a submission was not clear, the submission was attributed to the public. Most of the public submissions were from persons or groups intimately involved with the school systems (for example, university or college people, associations, health professionals). It should also be noted that, as many of the submissions did not contain explicit recommendations, it was often necessary to infer what the presenters were recommending. Discussion follows each of the tables.

TABLE 1: RECOMMENDATIONS BY SOURCE AND CONCERN

	Students	*Parents*	*Teachers*	*Trustees*	*Public*	*Total*
Goals	16	226	92	40	151	525
Standards, evaluation and grading	5	51	15	11	25	107
Teaching Method	8	36	30	6	20	100
Learning Condition	6	41	42	1	7	97
Special Needs	1	76	33	12	37	159
Native Peoples	0	20	10	1	9	40
Organization	2	88	35	11	38	174
Expanded Services	7	54	43	31	32	167
Parent Rights	0	48	2	1	8	59
Total	45	640	302	114	327	1428

As can be seen in *Table 1*, the greatest number of recommendations was made by parents, followed by teachers, the public, trustees and students. Parents made twice as many recommendations as did teachers or the public, and five-and-a-half to 14 times as many recommendations as did trustees or students.

Few direct criticisms of public schooling were made. Rather, the submissions appear to have focussed on changes that would result in improvements to what most presenters consider to be a fundamentally sound schooling system. Those criticisms that were made often concerned situations unique to the presenter. Such criticisms are indeed of importance to any assessment of the school system, but they must be viewed in context with all other data gathered by the Commission in order to determine how widespread they are.

Those aspects of the school system that were most frequently the subject of direct criticism were: the lack of modern equipment; poor standards of English usage by teachers; lack of specialized training on the part of teachers whose assignments seem to require such training; lack of appropriate standards and the monitoring of same; the tendency to stress the rights of the learner rather than their responsibilities; the apparent inability of parents to have a significant say in those decisions affecting their individual children; and the lack of programs appropriate for the gifted and learning disabled learners.

If one assumes that the number of recommendations made is a measure of the degree of desire for change that is held by British Columbians, then clearly a review of the goals or purposes of schooling is of highest concern. Aspects of the school system that are of the next order of concern are: matters of organization, the level of services provided, and programs for special needs learners. Next are: matters related to standards, evaluation and grading, teaching methods, and learning conditions. The lowest level of concern are matters concerning parent involvement and matters concerning Native Peoples. The number of recommendations should not, however, be interpreted as the only measure of the degree of importance, although the frequency of the concerns mentioned by the people of British Columbia that are discussed in this chapter reflect the relative importance that these writers attach to these issues. A fuller discussion of the nature of the recommendations accompanies each of the following tables.

TABLE 2: GOALS

	St.	*P.*	*T.*	*Tr.*	*Pb.*	*Total*
Stress learning to learn, communication skills, thinking, problem-solving, and researching	4	41	21	13	30	109
Stress vocational, career, and employment courses and opportunities	2	21	14	8	18	63
Stress Christianity and assimilation	0	35	9	2	12	58
Prescribe family-life education (sex, health)	1	20	8	1	24	54
Provide opportunities to learn a second language for all children (typically French)	2	40	4	1	6	53
Fine arts should be core	2	11	6	2	13	34
Make P.E. Compulsory (K-12)	0	12	8	2	10	32
Emphasize world understanding	5	8	4	1	7	25
Avoid early specialization	0	6	3	6	5	20
Stress technology (Computers)	0	3	8	0	4	15
Assign Family-life and Religious Education to the home	0	11	0	0	2	13
Stress duties, obligations, not rights	0	4	1	1	6	12
Stress Canadian Studies	0	4	1	0	5	10
Stress environmental education	0	0	1	0	6	7
Stress world religions	0	3	1	0	1	5
Define school mandate	0	1	2	1	0	4
No French Language Education	0	1	1	2	0	4
Stress role and rights of women	0	3	0	0	0	3
Encourage early specialization	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total:	16	226	92	40	151	525

Table 2 presents a detailed tally of the 525 recommendations that concerned goals. Most frequent was a desire that emphasis be given to preparing students to be active learners all their lives. Thinking skills, reference-use skills, communication skills, and the ability to solve problems are all viewed as necessary acquisitions for success in later life.

The second most frequent category of recommendations respecting goals concern vocational education, which is most often viewed by the writers of these briefs as education for the non-academic student. Submissions concerning the

non-academic student call for recognizing the worth of these students and for providing them with employment related programs. Frequent reference is made to the need for alternatives other than modified courses. Parents often state that preparation for vocations that do not require university entrance standing should be viewed as desirable. Furthermore, several of the submissions ask that students from all ability levels be encouraged to choose between vocations that require academic or non-academic training on the basis of preference rather than on the basis of success or non-success in academic courses.

A related theme contained in these recommendations is a call for the provision of experiences in the workplace for all students in the belief that greater relevance of courses and career counseling will result. Several submissions state that the sandwiching of work with schooling, especially after Grade 10, would be desirable in that the negative effects of a prolonged dependency and delayed entry into the adult world would be lessened.

Third in order of frequency are recommendations concerned with preserving, protecting, and enhancing the Christian way of life. Most requests are for the retention of the regulations requiring daily scripture readings and prayer. Many of the submissions ask that all immigrants to Canada be assimilated into a Christian society and that the concern for multiculturalism should not take precedence over the maintenance of a western and Christian way of life. Also of high interest is the inculcation of a sense of national pride.

Fourth most frequent are recommendations calling for family-life, health, and self-development education. Concern seems to be with improving the capacity of all school leavers to deal with the demands of parenting, the pressures of society that lead to substance abuse, and the many hazards to health. It should be noted, however, that 20% of the recommendations concerning these issues ask that they not be included in the mandate of the schools.

Fifth in line are those recommendations concerning second language programs. Almost all of the submissions concerning second language education are about French language instruction. Most frequent are those recommendations requesting that French Immersion programs be maintained and expanded. Almost as frequent, however, is the call for providing opportunities for all learners to have access to second language instruction. In the latter submissions, it is often pointed out that it is unrealistic to assume that French Immersion programs can expand in number and size to meet the needs of all learners, hence the need to implement alternate, more universal approaches to second language instruction.

Next in order of frequency are the recommendations concerning fine arts and physical education programs. Most submissions express a fear that these programs are in threat of diminishing in importance. A call for the return of Physical Education 11 to the status of a mandatory course is made.

The remaining recommendations concern the maintenance of a general, non-specialized curriculum offered in comprehensive secondary schools; providing learners with an appreciation of world issues from a humanistic perspective; developing technological and computer literacy; inculcating in learners a sense of responsibility; and a number of specific areas of current interest to small segments of British Columbia society.

TABLE 3: STANDARDS, EVALUATION, AND GRADING

	St.	*P.*	*T.*	*Tr.*	*Pub.*	*Total*
Promote only those who meet standards	0	14	3	3	7	27
Increase standards	0	6	0	0	5	11
To ensure fair comparison, standardize the curriculum and time allotments	2	5	1	0	0	8
Administer Gov't exams in all subjects	0	3	2	2	1	8
Standards should be national	0	5	0	0	2	7
Recognize excellence in non-academics	0	2	1	1	2	6
Give less emphasis to Gov't exams	0	2	3	1	0	6
Publicize that present standards are good	0	3	0	1	1	5
All subjects must improve English usage	0	4	0	0	1	5
Do not have standards common to all	0	0	3	1	0	4
Do not use competitive ranking or grading	0	1	1	1	1	4
Report more frequently and with more structure and detail	0	3	0	1	0	4
Use competitive grading and ranking	0	3	0	0	0	3
Do not use lettergrades or exams for primary	1	0	0	0	1	2
Assess samples not all students	0	0	0	0	1	1
Provincial Exams at Grade 10	0	0	0	0	1	1
School withdrawal should not be stigmatized	0	0	0	0	1	1
Remove cultural bias from exams	0	0	0	0	1	1
Measure higher learning skills	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total:	3	51	15	11	25	105

Table 3 presents a tally of those recommendations that concern setting and maintaining standards. Most frequent is the suggestion that learners who do not meet minimum standards be held back. Social promotion is considered by these presenters as leading to a lowering of standards. Also, standards are thought by many to be too low and not consistently applied. Government examinations appear to be well supported, but several submissions call for less emphasis to be given to their contribution to a Grade 12 student's final grade. None of the submissions provide an indication as to what the standards should be, or for that matter, how they should be determined. Finally, a number of the submissions reveal a belief that independent schools are on the whole superior to public schools.

Table 4 provides a more detailed view of those recommendations concerning methods of instruction. Independent study, group assignments, and activities that require thinking skills and problem-solving strategies are most frequently recommended. Such recommendations reflect a belief that the use of such methods will cause learners to be actively involved in their learning.

Next most frequent are those recommendations concerning learners for whom English is a second language. Concern is that these students require support for several years (five to eight) and that reading, language, and composition skills should be taught in the content subject areas such as science and social studies, not in pull-out programs.

Requests for the use of technology and cooperative learning models are next in order. Cooperative learning is seen to be more appropriate to mixed ability groups and multicultural groups. The use of technology is seen to be essential to prepare leraners for the future and it is also seen as a possible way of addressing the needs of special education pupils.

All other recommendations reflect highly specific concerns such as preparing students for university by exposing them to the lecture method in the senior years, or ensuring that all primary pupils master phonics or decoding skills.

TABLE 4: TEACHING METHODS

	St.	*P.*	*T.*	*Tr.*	*Pub.*	*Total*
Use methods that actively involve and assign responsibility to the students	2	8	7	1	5	23
Integrate ESL students and simultaneously teach them language and content	1	5	6	1	5	18
Use technology to instruct	1	3	4	0	2	10
Use a cooperative learning model	1	5	0	2	2	10
Specialists should teach specialties	0	2	5	0	2	9
Use approaches other than immersion to teach a second language	0	4	1	0	0	5
Provide greater individualization	0	2	0	1	1	4
Potential dropouts should be given work experience	1	0	1	1	0	3
Fine arts and vocational courses should be taught by practitioners in their workplace, not by teachers in schools	0	0	0	0	2	2
Expose pupils to the real world	0	1	1	0	0	2
Provide a range of materials and people	0	2	0	0	0	2
Do not use basal readers and worksheets	0	0	1	0	1	2
Control the amount of homework	1	0	1	0	0	1
Stress both content and process	0	0	1	0	0	1
Demonstrate relevance of what is taught	1	0	0	0	0	1
Teach formal science at elementary level	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other: (Phonics, Lecture, Multi-sensory)	0	1	2	0	0	3
Total:	8	36	30	6	20	100

TABLE 5: LEARNING CONDITIONS

	St.	*P.*	*T.*	*Tr.*	*Pub*	*Total*
Except for special classes, maximum class size should be 18 to 25	1	35	32	1	5	74
Remove poorly behaved and or non-performing pupils	0	3	3	0	0	6
Modern equipment should be provided	2	1	3	0	0	6
Provide preparation time to elementary teachers to meet demands of integration	0	0	3	0	0	3
Provide Modern materials and technology	2	1	0	0	0	3
Provide modern and updated references	1	2	0	0	0	3
Do not use class size as a panacea	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total:	6	41	42	1	7	97

Table 5 summarizes the recommendations concerning learning conditions. Most of the recommendations concern class size, thus these recommendations could more appropriately be seen to concern teachers' working conditions. Ideal class sizes as called for by the recommendations vary from 18 to 25 for regular classes. It appears that the current limit of 10 to 12 pupils for special education classes is acceptable to the writers of these submissions. Smaller class sizes are requested for classes in which special needs pupils are integrated, in which more than one grade level is represented (split classes), in which a high proportion of the pupils are slow learners, in which a high proportion of the pupils are gifted learners, and in which the nature of the course being taught demands a relatively greater marking load.

Table 6 presents a tally of those recommendations concerning special needs pupils—who for the purposes of this analysis are those pupils for whom the Ministry of Education provides additional funding to school districts so that programs responsive to special needs may be provided. Although the Ministry of Education currently includes the funding of programs for Native people in the special education budget, we have separated the comments about Native people from special education issues. Recommendations concerning Native peoples are presented in *Table 7*.

Most striking is the fact that except for the issue of integration of special needs learners (often referred to as mainstreaming), the majority of the recommendations were made with reference to those pupils perceived to have a learning disability. A number of the submissions contain a detailed account of the failure of the school system to identify in a timely and effective manner a pupil with a learning disability. Further, according to these submissions, too often when a pupil is identified as having a learning disability, the school system is unable to respond for reasons relating to funding, specialized training, and reluctance to take direction from parents or consultants hired by parents. Many of the presenters report that in frustration they turned to independent schools that were established solely to teach learning disabled pupils. Many parents turned to these schools at considerable expense and hardship.

TABLE 6: SPECIAL NEEDS

	St.	*P.*	*T.*	*Tr.*	*Pub.*	*Total*
Fully integrate special needs children, except for the very exceptional (gifted and slow learners and handicapped)	1	18	9	8	12	48
All children should be screened early for learning problems	0	13	2	0	7	22
Train teachers to identify and teach the learning disabled (dyslexic) students	0	18	1	0	2	21
Programs for the gifted (especially at the secondary level) must be provided	0	10	3	1	3	17
Stream students according to ability	0	4	3	0	2	9
Integration decisions should be based on the needs of the learner	0	6	1	0	2	9
Protect rights of the handicapped in law	0	0	1	1	4	6
Provide technology for "augmentation"	0	2	3	0	1	6
Specialist services must be provided remote areas	0	2	1	0	1	4
Revise the service levels for the learning disabled (Fiscal Framework)	0	1	2	1	0	4
ESL pupils require prolonged support beyond initial acquisition of English	0	0	1	1	1	3
Provide more support staff for integration	0	2	1	0	0	3
Establish programs for the emotionally/ socially disturbed	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total:	1	76	33	12	37	159

Those submissions that call for integration of the special needs pupil stress the importance of viewing integration as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. The term often used as an alternative to integration or mainstreaming is "least restrictive learning environment." Decisions as to the degree of integration and the amount of support to be provided are viewed to be made best in consultation with the parent and in the best interest of the learner. Pull-out programs, and at times segregated classrooms, are acceptable options provided they are shown to be least restrictive with respect to the goals set for the learner. The fear and high degree of caution that is prevalent in the public school system with respect to integration is very evident in the tone of many of the submissions.

Education of the gifted child is also of considerable interest. Submissions concerning the gifted learner appear to express moderate to high satisfaction with programs at the elementary level, and considerable dissatisfaction with the lack of programs at the secondary level. They also indicate a desire for programs that will provide challenge through opportunities for independent learning. Diverse options at all levels of schooling, ranging from enrichment within the regular classroom to separate schools for the gifted, are requested.

Table 7 summarizes those recommendations concerning Native People. These recommendations reflect a concern that Native people be given resources and support to develop materials and programs designed to reclaim and preserve their cultures. Also of concern is the need of Native people to develop effective parenting skills—skills, it is claimed, that were lost because a generation of Native people were removed from their homes to be educated in residential schools. Finally, there is a desire to ensure that the Native pupil is given equal access to all programs of the school system through the provision of extra resources and through the use of teaching methods that are sensitive to Native needs.

TABLE 7: EDUCATION OF NATIVE PEOPLES

	St.	P.	T.	Tr.	Pub.	Total
The Native culture must be reflected in the classroom	0	4	3	0	3	10
Early intervention and social support must be given	0	2	2	0	3	7
Apply same standards as for Non-Natives	0	3	1	1	0	5
Hire more Natives as models	0	0	1	0	2	3
Support development of Native languages	0	3	0	0	0	3
Provide more Native counsellors	0	3	0	0	0	3
Provide assistance with parent education	0	2	0	0	1	3
Let Native parents have more say	0	0	2	0	0	2
Provide transition classes at secondary	0	1	0	0	0	1
Provide work-experience	0	1	0	0	0	1
Treat beginners as E.S.L. learners	0	1	0	0	0	1
A clear Native education policy isrequired.	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total:	0	20	10	1	9	40

TABLE 8: ORGANIZATION

	St.	P.	T.	Tr.	Pub.	Total
End secondary school at Grade 10	0	10	9	3	12	34
Set up specialist schools	0	22	1	1	2	26
Stagger the start to kindergarten	0	9	8	2	5	24
All schools should be neighbourhood schools	0	8	0	1	5	14
Home schooling should be a legislated option	0	6	1	0	2	9
Increase the length and number of school days	0	4	1	2	2	9
Shorten the summer break and increase winter and spring break to more even periods	0	6	1	0	1	8
Kindergarten should be a whole day	0	2	2	1	1	6
Schools should run year round	1	1	2	0	1	5
Allocate different times to different courses	0	1	3	0	1	5
Specialist teachers at intermediate level	0	3	2	0	0	5
Class sizes should be larger after grade seven	0	2	1	0	1	4
Provide fewer electives	0	3	0	0	1	4
Do not add time to schooling	0	3	0	0	0	3
Mandate uniform organization for all schools	0	3	0	0	0	3
Other (semestered, streaming, closed)	0	1	1	0	1	3
Older students should teach younger pupils	0	1	0	0	1	2
Open attendance boundaries, provide choice	0	1	0	0	1	2
Schools should be K-8 then 9-12	0	0	2	0	0	2
The school week should be four extended days	1	0	0	1	0	2
The school system should be non-graded	0	0	1	0	1	2
Total:	2	88	35	11	38	174

Table 8 presents a tally of those recommendations concerning the organization of schools. The most striking feature of the recommendations presented is their variety. As the nature of most of the recommendations made is self-evident, only four categories of concern are discussed here: end secondary school at Grade 10, stagger the start to Kindergarten, set up specialist schools, and allocate different times to different courses.

Those submissions that recommend completion of secondary school at the Grade 10 level suggest that such should occur only if the learner is guaranteed a minimum number (usually two to three years) of further years of tuition free or subsidized schooling, to be taken at any time in the learner's life and at any institution of the learner's choosing. Advantages of such an arrangement are thought to be: the student will be able to sandwich work with learning; learners after Grade 10 will continue their schooling with a greater degree of choice and probably be in schools where the mix

of learners will include adolescents as well as adults of varying ages; and learners will be able to enter the "real" world and thus gain a better appreciation of the value of education and will thus return to their studies with greater zeal.

The recommendations concerning entry to Kindergarten reflect a belief that children differ in their readiness to benefit from schooling and that some should be able to start their schooling prior to their fifth year and others should have their entry into school delayed. It should be noted that existing legislation permits delay of entry, but early entry is disallowed.

The recommendations calling for specialized schools include those that ask for the privatization of all schools as well as those that ask for the establishment of schools that offer specialized programs such as the fine arts, vocational or technical preparation, and the arts and sciences. Most of the recommendations are of the latter type, and many of these suggest that the provision of specialized schools should not occur until the senior grades.

The concern with time allotments is with reference to the fact that at present all secondary school courses are assigned an equal number of hours of instruction. The submissions suggest that the courses should be prioritized in order of importance and that different allotments of time should then be given. Most often it is suggested that English courses should be given more time than they are at present. None of the submissions clearly identifies which course should receive the least amount of time.

TABLE 9: EXPANDED SERVICES

	St.	*P.*	*T.*	*Tr.*	*Pub.*	*Total*
Elementary counsellors, family counsellors, and psychological counsellors must be provided	1	17	19	9	8	54
Preschool, daycare, after school care and childcare should be provided	0	14	9	9	12	44
The services of health and social agencies (other Ministries) should be provided at the school site	0	10	6	4	5	25
There should be a mechanism set up to coordinate social and health services to ensure that the child is served	1	4	1	3	2	11
Provide Post-secondary programs for the learning disabled and non-graduate	0	1	3	3	2	9
There should be increased links between the home, school and the workplace	1	2	2	1	0	6
Specialized health personnel should be made available to schools in the rural areas	0	2	2	1	0	5
Meals should be provided to those children in need	0	2	1	0	1	4
Provide lunchrooms for all schools	2	0	0	0	1	3
Provide greater financial assistance to rural graduates to attend post-secondary	1	1	0	1	0	3
Provide mandatory driver training	0	0	0	0	1	1
Improve the quality of commercial television	0	1	0	0	0	1
Provide dental care to students	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total:	7	54	43	31	32	167

Table 9 presents tallies of the recommendations that call for an expansion of the services provided by the school system. Most of the recommendations are based on the premise that learners will be able to take better advantage of what the schools offer if they are given support designed to help them overcome obstacles in life circumstances for which they cannot be held responsible. Several of the submissions express concern that the provision of services called for by these recommendations be done in such a manner that the role of the family is not usurped.

Submissions that make recommendations calling for coordination of services express concern that a significant number of learners in need of health or social services fall through the cracks. These submissions suggest that the best place for the delivery of all services to children of school age is the neighbourhood school. The submissions are not clear as

to who should be responsible for the delivery of the services. However, submissions from educators claim that there is an increasing number of learners in need of social and health services, as well as an increasing number of societal problems for which the school is most often turned to for assistance. To deny assistance, they say, is unacceptable as the needs of learners cannot be ignored if the learner is to take advantage of what the school has to offer. However, they also state that the proportion of their time and of the schools' resources that they find necessary to devote to these learners is unacceptable. Clearly, other arrangements are required.

Table 10 presents a tally of the recommendations made regarding the rights and involvement of parents. It should be noted that very few of the submissions addressed the issue of parent rights. Those that did were submitted mostly by parents who hold fundamentalist Christian views and who are concerned with protecting their children from viewpoints and practices they believe to be an attack on their preferred way of life. The only other identifiable group of parents that made recommendations concerning parent rights are those whose children are special needs learners and who wish to have greater influence in the programs provided for their children.

TABLE 10: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

	St.	*P.*	*T.*	*Tr.*	*Pub.*	*Total*
Parents should have the right to choose their child's school, teacher and textbooks	0	16	1	0	2	19
Parents should be guarantied the right to participate in all decisions affecting their children	0	10	0	1	3	14
Set up advisory bodies at each school	0	7	0	0	0	7
Legislate the right to home-schooling	0	6	0	0	0	6
Parents must be held responsible for their children's attitudes and behaviour	0	2	1	0	1	4
Parents should have non-voting representation on school boards to serve as watchdogs	0	3	0	0	0	3
Parents should have power to prevent indoctrination and social engineering	0	2	0	0	1	3
Set up an appeal board for parents or proclaim the relevant sections of the Ombudsman Act	0	1	0	0	1	2
Set up a provincial advisory body of parents to advise re curriculum and policies	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total:	0	48	2	1	8	59

CONCLUSION

The submissions that contain recommendations concerning the learner make very few direct criticisms of the public school system. Those criticisms that are made concern the lack of modern equipment, poor standards, lack of specialist teachers, the tendency to stress the rights of learners rather than their responsibilities, lack of parent rights, and the lack of programs for the gifted and the learning disabled.

The greatest number of recommendations made regarding the learner were made by parents, followed first by teachers and then by the public, trustees, and students. The greatest number of recommendations for all groups concern the goals or purposes of schooling. Many of these recommendations appear to call for an expanded rather than a narrower mandate for the schools. The major additions include greater provision for the non-academic student, provision of work-related programs for all students, and provision of health and social support services for the disadvantaged (especially for preschool children). These recommendations, along with those calling for additional services for pupils, illustrate the conflicting demands referred to in many of the submissions made by school trustees, teachers and administrators. Such conflict may be a feature of a pluralistic society. Resolution of conflicting demands, however, should not fall to the local board of trustees nor to the school principal and staff. Rather, the central government must provide clear direction. It would appear, therefore, that a clearly stated school mandate would be beneficial.

Submissions concerning standards, evaluation and grading suggest that standards should be the same throughout the province and perhaps the nation. Furthermore, promotion of those learners who do not meet minimum standards is thought to be inappropriate. Standards are seen to serve many functions, including evaluation of teachers and of schools. Finally, several of the submissions express concern that evaluation and grading practices be fair and accurate.

Submissions concerning methods stress the need to involve the student actively in learning. Only then, it is felt, will the learner develop a love of learning and thus acquire the necessary attitudes and skills that are necessary to life long learning. Submissions concerning learning conditions mostly address issues of class size and thus could also be viewed as concerning working conditions.

Submissions concerning special needs learners were often presented by means of case histories as told by a parent. Those concerning the learning disabled student make frequent reference to the incidence of dyslexia, inadequate funding, lack of teacher awareness and training, and the need to seek service from independent schools that specialize in teaching the dyslexic learner. Those concerning the gifted learner appear to express moderate to high satisfaction with programs at the elementary level and a considerable dissatisfaction with the lack of programs at the secondary level. Finally those concerning non-academic students call for a recognition of these students as being of worth and for the provision of programs that are not simply modified versions of regular courses.

A related theme contained in these submissions is the call for the provision of experiences in the workplace for all students. Seen as desirable is the sandwiching of work with schooling, especially after Grade 10, so that the negative effects of a prolonged dependency and a delayed entry into the adult world could be lessened.

Submissions concerning education of Native People, though few in number, are passionate and clearly illustrate the complexity of the issues that must be addressed. Reclamation of lost culture and compensatory support for the Native student are the focus of most of the recommendations made in these submissions.

Submissions regarding expanded services reflect a concern for the needs of pupils whose life situation prevents them from taking advantage of what schools have to offer. Issues appear to be the level of service to be provided and the assignment of responsibility for providing such services. As stated above, consideration of the recommendations made must also take into account the recommendations regarding the goals of education and schooling.

Submissions concerning parent involvement were few in number. Parent rights seem to be the major issue. Parents appear to want almost absolute rights and when there is a conflict between the home and the school, parents would like a third party to settle the dispute. Those parents who request such rights appear to be those with special needs children or who wish to protect their children from competing value systems.

In closing, it must be pointed out that it is impossible to portray the tone and the strength of argument contained in the more than 2,000 submissions made to the Commission. Ideally, all interested parties should read all of the submissions and draw their own conclusions. Only then will they develop an appreciation for the eloquence displayed, the depth of understanding, and the strength of conviction held by many of the presentors.

2. The Learners of British Columbia: Enrolment Patterns, Societal Trends, Schools and Programs

The cultivation of attitudes and skills conducive to life-long learning is a stated goal of British Columbia's education system. Thus, ideally, all residents of British Columbia are learners. This report, however, is concerned primarily with learners between the ages of five and 19—the learners targeted in the terms of reference given this Royal Commission, and the learners for whom school boards must provide "sufficient" free school accommodation and tuition as set forth in the *School Act* and its accompanying Regulations.

In the legislation, a person is deemed to be of school age if, on or before December 31 in that school year, he or she has attained or shall have attained the age of six or more years, and if he or she has not or shall not have, prior to the first day of September in that school year, attained the age of 19 years. Furthermore, all persons between their seventh and fifteen birthdays are required to attend school daily—failure to do so may result in the fining of parents up to ten dollars a day. Also, parents who wish to have their child attend Kindergarten must enrol that child in September of the school year in which the child will be five years of age by December 31, and boards may provide school accommodation and tuition to persons over school age either free of charge or subject to tuition fees. Finally, parents may gain exemptions for their children on condition that they provide a comparable basic education for their children. Home schooling and private or independent schools are thus sanctioned.

It should be noted that until 1977, British Columbia governments regulated and provided financial support only to the public schools. Other forms of schooling, including private and church associated schools, did not receive assistance and were not obligated to meet government requirements. In 1977, the government passed the *Independent Schools Support Act* which authorized the provision of financial support for those independent schools who chose to apply and to meet the requirements of the Act. The degree of financial support is related to the degree of compatibility with the program requirements of the Public School System.

Typically, then, children in British Columbia attend school for thirteen years (Kindergarten to Grade 12)—from the year in which they turn five to the year in which they turn 18. Assuming that the average life span of a present-day British Columbian will be 80 years, and that all pupils attend school for 13 years (each year comprising 195 days and 5 hours of instruction per day) each learner will spend only about 2% of his or her lifetime in school! Further, assuming that the average hours of "awake time" per day amount to 15, each learner will spend only about 3% of the "awake lifetime" in school; during that time the schools are to serve society by ensuring that learners achieve both the expectations of society and their full potential. A fuller discussion of this enormous and critically important task is presented in Chapter 6 of this report with an analysis of the goals of education.

It is the nature and the quality of that 2% to 3% of a learner's lifetime that is the prime focus of the Commission's work. However, because the importance of preschool experiences and the relationship of family life to success or non-success in school are well documented in the research literature, the Commission must also be concerned with the quality of the first five years of a learner's life and of the quality of the home life of a school aged learner, especially with respect to providing pupils with attitudes towards adults, learning, and self that are conducive to success in school.

What follows are presentations of enrolment data for public and non-public (independent) schools, enrolment data concerning special needs learners, and enrolment data concerning dropouts and graduation rates. We then turn our attention to a consideration of societal factors that likely affect school achievement, and finally to a discussion of schools and programs that are available to the learners of British Columbia.

School Enrolments

Public School Enrolments

Results of the June 3, 1986 Census indicate that 516, 464 residents of British Columbia were aged five to 17, the ages comparable to Kindergarten to Grade 12. Records kept and projections made by the Schools Research and Analysis Division indicate that enrolments have declined from a peak headcount of 525,000 in 1977 to a low headcount of about 486,000 in 1986. The enrolment in the public schools of British Columbia is now rising and will gradually increase to over 500,000 by 1992.

The response of school systems to declining enrolments and to increasing enrolments has implications with respect to the quality of the learning situation that is provided to our children. Decline often results in school closures, staff reductions based on seniority rather than performance, on a lessening of expenditures on learning materials, and reduced resources committed to program and staff development . Growth often results in overcrowded schools, delay in building projects and inability to give sufficient attention to important educational issues other than those created by a need to respond to the immediate and pressing demands of growth. The learner's best interests are often not served by a system that is unable to respond to decline and growth in an orderly and immediate manner, as has been the case in the past several years.

Table 11 shows age groups as of the June 1986 census, the September 1986 public school grade enrolment, and the latter as a percentage of the former. Recognizing that ages and grades do not correspond exactly, the table does, however, provide a reasonable estimate of the portion of the eligible population that was enrolled in public schools. At the elementary level, about 95% of the eligible age cohort appears to be enrolled in public schools. The secondary equivalent is about 93%.

Table 11. Comparison of Cohort Age Groups and Public School Enrolments (June and September, 1986)

Age	*Number from 1986 Census*	*Public School Enrolment (Sept. 1986)*		*Enrolment as % of Age Group*
		Grade	*Enrolment*	
5	39,847	K	37,360	93.76
6	39,625	1	38,492	97.14
7	38,970	2	36,892	94.67
8	37,824	3	35,658	94.27
9	38,203	4	35,231	92.22
10	38,199	5	34,745	90.96
11	38,247	6	35,046	91.63
12	37,367	7	34,502	92.33
		Elem. Ungr.	5,216	
Sub-Total Age 5-12	308,282	Grades K-7	293,142	95.09%
13	38,997	8	36,937	94.72
14	39,783	9	37,480	94.21
15	43,366	10	38,571	88.94
16	43,636	11	38,494	88.22
17	42,400	12	34,913	82.34
		Sec. Ungr.	6,684	
Sub-Total Age 13-17	208,182	Grades 8-12	193,079	92.75%
TOTAL	516,464		486,221	94.14%

SOURCE: Schools Research and Analysis, Ministry of Education; Central Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Economic Development; and Statistics Canada, Ottawa.

Independent School Enrolment

Independent school grade enrolment figures as presented in the Ministry of Education's Annual Report indicate a total enrolment of 27,878 pupils of which approximately 21,000 were enrolled in elementary grades. Further, 426 of these pupils are reported to be enrolled in special education funded programs (1.5% of the total independent school enrolment), and 268 of these special education pupils are enrolled in independent schools established especially for the learning disabled and the hearing impaired. If these latter schools are excluded, then the independent schools have funded special education programs for 177 of their pupils (0.64%). Finally, it should be noted that the above figures are for funded independent schools only. It is estimated that an additional 3,000-4,000 pupils attend non-funded independent schools and another 2,000 pupils are educated at home. Also, it must be noted that the enrolment in funded independent schools is predicted to increase about 6% per year for the next four years, a growth from approximately 5% to 8% of the total British Columbia school population. Such growth appears to be directly correlated with the provision of funding to non-public schools.

It should also be noted that funded independent schools must meet minimum course requirements as determined by the Ministry of Education. The monitoring of home-schooling and of non-funded independent schools, however, does not take place. The possibility for abuse and or neglect of these learners is greater than is the case for public and funded-independent schools.

Special Education Enrolments

Table 12 shows September 1986 public school grade enrolment for cost-shared special education programs. Also shown is the percentage of the total public school grade enrolment and the percentage change in enrolment in funded special education programs from September 1982 to September 1986. Cost-shared programs are those for which earmarked funds are provided by the Ministry of Education in order to ensure accommodation of children with special learning needs. Not included in these figures are pupils provided educational services in youth containment centres operated under the aegis of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Two programs which the Ministry of Education includes under special programs which are not traditional special education programs and are not treated as such by most other jurisdictions are Native Education and English as a Second Language. Together they had a funded enrolment of 31,587 pupils or 52.1% of the 1986/87 funded special programs enrolment. These pupils are identified by the Ministry as being in special programs in order to target funding toward their particular requirements. Issues concerning English as a Second Language learners and Native learners is discussed more fully in this chapter under the heading of Programs.

The June 1987 Annual Report of the Ministry of Education states that enrolments in funded special education programs have varied over time for a number of reasons including improved diagnostic services, improved health services (e.g., the decrease in the incidence of rubella related to hearing impairment), and more precise classification. As an aside, it is important to note that, while some learning problems which have been associated with medical problems have been reduced due to improved medical practice, some have increased as a result of these medical improvements. For example, the incidence of mortality due to premature birth has lowered in recent years due to improvements in the medical practices available to such infants. Thus, more premature infants are surviving and are attending school. It is also the case that the incidence of learning problems is higher in children who have had low birth weight. The report also states that among individual school districts, the proportion of children enrolled in special education programs (exclusive of Native Education and English as a Second Language) ranges from 4% to 18%. This range seems to be related to regional demographic differences.

The Ministry of Education Annual Report also states that total growth in enrolment, exclusive of Native People and English as a Second Language pupils, has been 9.09% since 1982. This growth has occurred despite a decline in the total provincial enrolment of 3.15% in the same period. However, the Supervisors and Directors of Special Education

for the Greater Vancouver region point out in their submission to the Commission that the incidence rate for learning handicaps requiring special education programs is 10.5% exclusive of Native Education and English as a Second Language programs, yet the service rate for special needs pupils in British Columbia is only 4.02%.

Table 12. Enrolment in Cost-Shared Special Programs
September 1986

Program	*Enrolment*	*% of Special Ed Enrolment*	*% Change 82-86*	*% of Total Enrolment*
Trainable Mentally Handicapped	1,254	4.32	-2.03	.26
Severe/Profound Handicapped	368	1.27	13.23	.08
Physically Handicapped	425	1.46	-4.06	.09
Visually Impaired	402	1.38	-18.79	.08
Hearing Impaired	797	2.74	-29.03	.16
Autistic	150	.52	-10.18	.03
Severe Learning Disabled*	6,637	22.86	62.83	1.37
Educable Mentally Handicapped*	4,108	14.15	5.77	.84
Severe Behaviour*	2,573	8.86	-9.66	.53
Rehabilitation*	3161	10.88	-8.83	.65
Gifted*	9,161	31.55	-3.86	1.88
Total:	**29,036**	**100.00%**	**5.06%**	**5.97%**
English as a Second Language	15,707		21.12	3.23
Native Education	15,882		6.10	3.26
Total Cost-Shared Programs	60,623		9.09%	12.47%

Source: Schools Research and Analysis * Full Time Equivalent enrolment

Drop-Out, Withdrawal, and Graduation Rates

Data concerning drop-outs is not gathered by the Ministry of Education. Withdrawal and graduation rate data are, however, gathered. Withdrawals are very specifically defined by the Ministry as pupils who leave a public school during the course of the school year and do not register in another British Columbia public school during that school year. Such students may have dropped out or moved to another province or country, or may have transferred to an independent school.

As all children must attend school between the ages of 7 and 15, it can be assumed that the withdrawal rates for elementary schools (an average of less than 0.5% per grade per year for the past ten years) include virtually no dropouts. Secondary withdrawal rates, on the other hand, (an average of about 7% per grade per year over the past ten years) do include drop-outs. Determination of an accurate drop-out rate, however, is a complex and difficult matter.

One Ministry of Education research official with whom we spoke about these issues estimates the actual average secondary drop-out rate over the past ten years to be about 5.5% per year with the cumulative rate being about 22% for an age cohort. This estimate, however, is not supported by the comparison of age cohort data provided by the 1986 census report and combined enrolment data for public and independent schools as of June 1986. As was noted above (see *Table 11*), a comparison of those data indicates that about 99.9% of the age cohort group in 1986 was enrolled in school. However, there is not an absolute relationship between cohort age group data and grade enrolment data, nor are the Census data perfectly reliable (estimates are that census data is characterized by a 4% to 5% margin of error). While much is made in the media and in other public spheres about "the drop-out problem", it is clear to us that these discussions proceed on the basis of grossly inadequate data. What is apparent is that if accurate estimates of drop-outs is desirable, a system must be developed to provide the necessary data. Finally, drop-out rates for individual districts, according to the Ministry of Education, vary from less than 5% per annum to over 10% per annum. The question at issue is this: what is an acceptable drop-out rate? The issue is discussed more fully in the chapter of this report that deals with standards.

The reasons for drop-outs are complex. A study by School District 24 (Kamloops) in March, 1988, indicated that pupils left school for reasons of health, dislike of school, failure, family problems, incarceration, pregnancy, joining the workforce, and financial concerns. A U.S. study by Michelle Fine (1987) cites similar reasons. Characteristics of the drop-outs from the Kamloops schools are as follows. Of the 155 drop-outs included in the study, 93% were in grade nine or above; 33% had been identified as having reading difficulties; almost all who had been identified as having reading difficulties had been given extra assistance with reading and learning problems; ability and achievement levels (as indicated by standardized achievement test results and by school grades) for this group was typical of a normal population —that is, ability and achievement were not predictors of dropping out, at least with this group of adolescents.

The graduation rate is defined by the Ministry of Education as the number of grade 12 graduates as of October 31, expressed as a percentage of students enrolled in Grade 12 on September 30 of the previous year. Graduates are those pupils who have met all requirements as set down in regulations. Pupils who are enrolled in special programs, such as those for the mentally handicapped, and slow learners, who for a variety of reasons fail to meet all of the graduation requirements, are unable to graduate despite attendance of school often for more than 13 years. It is obvious that not all students, despite their best efforts, are capable of meeting the graduation requirements. It would be foolhardy to expect every child who started school to graduate. Yet it is abundantly clear that failure to graduate from high school is associated with a host of problems later in life. For example, earning power throughout the adult years is related to high school completion, as are other quality of life indices such as the incidence of requiring welfare and, for those people who require welfare assistance, the length of time for which this assistance is required. Put crudely, the social cost of high drop-out rates is much like the mechanic's warning: "Pay me now or pay me later!" At issue, therefore, is what is an acceptable graduation rate. Also at issue is the nature of the alternate programs provided for those pupils who are unlikely to be able to fulfill minimum graduation requirements. It seems apparent that should quality programs not be provided, these pupils would have no recourse but to drop out of school.

The 1987 Annual Report of the Ministry of Education states that the graduation rate was between 75% and 79% from 1981 to 1985. The graduation rate then dropped to 73% in 1986 and 71% in 1987. According to Ministry of Education officials, it is almost certain that the graduation rate has been understated. Two reasons are given. First, the data reported are not complete in that the pupils who graduate mid-year are not included. Second, all students registered in English 12, or who are not able to take the required number of courses for graduation in a single year, are considered to be eligible to graduate when many of these students are, in fact, not eligible to graduate for another year. Their presence in the September 30th data serves to reduce the calculated graduation rate. The argument provided to us by the Ministry of Education for this state of affairs is that when one takes these matters into consideration, the true graduation rate is closer to 80%. But if this is the case, it is likely that the graduation rate for the 1981 to 1985 period was also underestimated and the true graduation rate for that period was closer to 84% than 88%. We are convinced that the relative change over this decade in the graduation rate reflects a true state of affairs. A smaller percentage of the adolescents in British Columbia graduate from secondary school today than did a decade ago.

We believe that the reason for the severe drop in graduation rates from 1985 to 1987 may be the change in graduation requirements announced in 1984 by the then Minister of Education. This change was partially enforced in 1986 and fully enforced in 1987. The change included raising the required number of courses from 12 to 13, requiring a math and a science course at the Grade 11 level, and requiring all students to select a major area of study comprising 8 courses including 4 courses in Grade 12 and their Grade 11 prerequisites. When announced by means of a discussion paper, school administrators predicted that a significant number of those students who typically did not have a major area of study, but who successfully completed the required number of Grade 11 and Grade 12 courses without specializing, would in future not qualify for graduation.

School districts and post secondary institutions also report that a significant number of non-graduates enrol in courses that will qualify them for an adult graduation certificate or for high school graduation. For example, one school visited by the Commission provided enrolment data which indicated that the evening class enrolment for part time students was over 1,000, a number equal to the daytime enrolment. An examination of the courses being taken by these learners indicates that 80% were Grade 11 and 12 academic credit courses which would qualify the learner for a graduation diploma. It appears, therefore, that where the opportunity exists, many of the non-graduates of British Columbia's secondary schools do return to upgrade.

Societal Factors

Many of the dramatic changes to the social fabric of British Columbia are discussed in the report of the Commission's research group on The Schools and Society of British Columbia. These changes in our society have a major influence on the learners of British Columbia. We discuss some of those influences in this section. Susanne M. Hunter, in a paper prepared for the Commission research team, presents the following census data regarding population characteristics in British Columbia:

- In 1986, British Columbia had a population of 2,883,370 people.
- About 80% had English as a mother tongue while 14% had a non-official language.
- About one-half of those 15 years of age or more were married and one-fifth were single.
- About one-half of those 15 years and older had attained an elementary education.
- Also in 1986, 775,875 British Columbia families lived in private households and 62% had children living at home, of which 40% had one child and 41% had 2 children, 45 % involved only 2 people while about one-fifth had 4 people for an average family size of 3.0.
- Seven-eighths of the families were husband-wife families and one-eighth were one-parent families.
- In 1986 in British Columbia, 896,070 children lived at home, about one-quarter were preschool age and one-half were school-aged, and the average number of children per family was 1.2.
- In 1985, slightly more than half of British Columbia's married women and women in families participated in the labour force, and 13-14% were unemployed. This participation rate was above average for the nation, especially for women whose children were under 16 and who had no husband.
- About 30% of British Columbia women who were in the work force worked part time, and a women's average income in British Columbia in 1985 was slightly more than half that of a man's.
- Approximately 82% of British Columbia's single-parent families are headed by women and 14% of these families have below poverty level incomes. Almost 12.5 % (30% of single mothers and 8.5% of two-parent families) claimed some form of social assistance as their major source of income in 1980.
- 22% of the children in British Columbia live in low income families, and 14% of the children in British Columbia in 1986 lived in single-parent families, whereas in 1976 only 7% of the children of British Columbia lived in lone-parent families.
- From 1966 to 1986 the number of lone-parent families grew 130% while the number of two-parent families grew 42% in the same time period. The most frequent causes reported in 1981 for lone-parent families were: widowhood (33%), marriage breakdown (58%), divorce (30%), and never married (15%); whereas in 1941, the most frequent causes reported in 1941 were: widowhood (73%), marriage breakdown (25%), divorce (3%), and never married (1%).
- In 1984, more than one-half of all children under 6 years of age were cared for by someone other than a parent on a regular basis, and in 1980, 12% of preschool children with mothers in the labour force were in licensed family or centre day dare on a full-time basis.
- Religious affiliation in the period from 1951 to 1981 declined about 25% for Protestants, grew about 5% for Catholics, grew about 400% for Eastern Non-Christians, grew about 200% for para-religious groups, and grew about 18% for no-affiliation.

These are rather startling statistics. They reflect a major shift in the nature of the family and childhood in British Columbia, as they do elsewhere. These changes also have a dramatic effect on how children approach their time at school. Many writers on these topics take a stance that "blames the victim." That is, they talk of these changes as the people that are involved in them are bad and as if our society is headed for a disaster. While for us it is undeniable that these changes are momentous, we do not think that they necessarily forecast doom. Thus, it is important that these data be interpreted as indices of societal change; some are potentially bad, but some are potentially good.

Such characteristics and trends of society have been shown by research to be strongly linked to school achievement, and they must, therefore, be taken into consideration by government and school officials. To illustrate, a few of the well known studies of family characteristics and school achievement are cited below.

James Coleman in his 1966 *Equality of Educational Opportunity* report demonstrated that variations among family backgrounds account for more difference in achievement than do variations among schools. According to Coleman and Hoffer (1987) in a later study the evidence does not indicate that schools do not make a difference, rather, there is

evidence that in the absence of schooling, children learn very little of certain things such as mathematics, whatever their background is. What the evidence does suggest is that schools are more effective for children from strong family backgrounds than for children from weak ones. Strong family backgrounds, according to Kevin Marjoribanks (1979), are characterized by a press for language development, for intellectuality, for achievement motivation, and for independence. Families that are not strong in these respects are often in conflict with schools in that they differ in values and in structures of discipline and support.

Jean Chall (1982), in a major report on the relationships between family characteristics and children's acquisition of literacy, offers the following generalization about the important relationship between families and schools :

> *Clearly, neither home nor school is entirely responsible for children's failure to achieve adequate levels of literacy. Either home or school can, in the absence of much positive influence from the other, provide the basis for considerable growth in reading, writing, and language skills. The fortunate children from enriching homes with a positive emotional climate, who also spend time in classrooms that foster the development of reading, writing and language, have the opportunity to develop their literacy potential to the fullest. However, many children whose home environments are less than optimally enriching or positive can still achieve adequate literacy if they attend classrooms where the quality of instruction is high, where the materials are varied and challenging, and where vocabulary and writing are taught explicitly. Similarly, children from enriched and emotionally stable homes can survive a few years of uninspired teaching and unchallenging school activities without disastrous effects on their literacy skill. It is only if children's homes and their schools both fail to provide a minimum of enrichment, challenge, emotional support, and instruction that they are greatly at risk for failure. To the extent that low-income children, such as those in our sample are more likely than middle-income children to come from homes with high levels of stress, with few or inadequate literacy materials and models, where access to activities with adults is limited because of lack of money or time —to that extent we are obliged to provide such children more enriching, more stimulating, more challenging classroom experiences. (pp 550-51)*

The societal data presented above suggest that the percentage of families in British Columbia with the capability to provide their children with strong environments to support school learning is on the decline. This is a result of societal changes such as entry of women into the work force, family breakups, decline in church attendance, mobility and isolation of children from the extended family. The likelihood that a significant number of learners have not enjoyed supportive preschool years and out-of-school experiences that are conducive to achievement in school is increasing. As we have shown in the first chapter of this report, many of the submissions to the Commission comment on the requirement to address the needs of a minority of learners who require an inordinate amount of time and energy of their teachers and who require family and health support from other agencies.

Although the societal data indicate trends and family characteristics that may be detrimental to a significant number of learners, policy makers must keep in mind that the vast majority of learners, no matter what the nature of their family, are provided with family situations that are conducive to success in schooling.

What is of concern to the Commission, then, is the common and apparently supportable claim that parental poverty, family instability, and low social status tend to lead children to fail at school, which in turn limits their own adult occupational status and ability to provide quality family life for their children. The issue is, should the state intervene in an attempt to break life cycles of social disability leading to educational failure and followed by social disability? If the state should, under what circumstances and by what procedures? Central to this issue is the tension between respect for family privacy and parent rights and concern for the victims of social forces detrimental to family health. The 'best interest' of the learner, although not always easy to determine, must guide policy makers in their consideration of increasing requests for daycare, preschool, afterschool care, family support, and meal programs.

A recent report by the Stanford Center for the Study of Families, Children and Youth provides findings of a study by Stanford researchers (Shirley Feldman, Daniel Weinberger, and Martin Ford) that are relevant to this discussion. These researchers have approached the problem of changes in family structure much in the way that we discuss above. That is, they view these changes dispassionately, rather than lamenting that old values and structures are being ruined. From this perspective they explored the types of parenting practices, regardless of the family structures, that had positive influences on children's success at school. As reported in the *Stanford Observer*, (February, 1988) their findings indicate that "while some circumstances are clearly more likely to foster emotional and behavioural problems in children, the

provision of a supportive environment by at least one caring parent appears to give most children a good chance of weathering the negative factors in childhood and adolescence and emerging as well-adjusted people".

It appears, then, that good parenting rather than life circumstances is the critical factor, thus support that leads to effective parenting should be given top priority. Helping to create stronger families through parent education, however, is only part of the solution. It is still the case that poverty and disadvantage reduces the chances that children are successful in school. Thus, we believe that parent education should be followed by steps which will ensure quality care and preschool programs for young children and financial support adequate to alleviate the effects of poverty.

One other aspect of family life which likely has significant influence on the ability of learners to take full advantage of their schooling is the use of time available to the learner out of school. As will be seen in other sections of this report on the learner, the children and youth of British Columbia lead very busy lives, in which school does not always have a significant place. In a recent survey of an urban secondary school, about 40% of the students indicated that they held part-time jobs and 2% indicated that they held full-time jobs. The majority of these students were in Grades 10, 11, and 12. The percentage of students engaged in work out of school hours in the senior grades, therefore, is likely to be higher than 40%. More is said about this matter in the chapter about standards.

Types of Schools

The 486,221 public school pupils are enrolled in 1506 schools (1137 elementary, 97 elementary-secondary, 84 junior secondary, 170 secondary, and 18 senior secondary). Approximately 67% attend schools in centres with populations of 65,000 or greater, while 33% attend schools in smaller centres. School sizes range from enrolments of 8 to 1782.

An overriding characteristic of the public schools is their sameness. All are required to offer the same number of hours of instruction, to provide instruction in the same core and authorized elective subjects, to use only materials from a provincially prescribed and authorized list, to use the same evaluation and reporting procedures, to employ certified teachers, and to follow the same rules and regulations as determined at the provincial level. Furthermore, all have non-restrictive admission policies and all cater to the needs of almost all learners in regular classrooms. Only those pupils with extreme learning difficulties are segregated and there is a growing demand that these learners be integrated or mainstreamed. Variations do exist from region to region and secondary schools are different from elementary schools, but the sameness is the dominant feature.

The 27,878 funded non-public school pupils are enrolled in 181 schools: 50 enrolling less than 50 pupils, 25 enrolling 51 to 100 pupils, 31 enrolling 101 to 150 pupils, 34 enrolling 151 to 200 pupils, 25 enrolling 201 to 250 pupils and the remaining 17 enrolling over 250 pupils . The range in size is from 11 to 944. Approximately 81% of these pupils attend schools situated in cities of over 65,000 or greater; the remainder attend schools in smaller centres.

It would be most misleading to imply that British Columbia's independent schools are a single entity in distinction to the province's public system. About 80 % of the province's funded independent schools have religiously based frameworks. As indicated in a paper prepared by Jean Barman for the Commission, some 70 of these schools are Catholic, another 40 are Dutch Calvinist or Christian Reform, another 25 are Seventh Day Adventist, 2 are Jewish, and others include Mennonite, Sikh, Muslim and Lutheran. Those independent schools whose religious framework would be eroded by compliance with provincial regulations have elected not to comply. As a consequence they do not qualify for funding. It appears that this group of schools is the fastest growing in number. The remaining independent schools have dominantly secular philosophical frameworks. A dozen or more are intended for children with special needs ranging from learning disabilities to giftedness. Another 10 are organized along British Public School lines. These are intended for the academic and economic élite.

Almost all independent schools, unlike the public schools, have restrictive admission policies. Also, linkages between these schools is weak to non-existent. Funded schools have a common link in that the Ministry of Education is required to inspect them on a regular basis as a condition of their receiving funding. However, even when these schools have similar philosophical frameworks, they seem to relate only to their immediate parent community and at times even compete with rather than co-operate with one another —except with respect to lobby for additional funding.

Programs

Programs offered in public schools, as mentioned above, include all required core programs, a variety of authorized electives, and in some instances locally developed and authorized courses reflecting local needs or individual teacher preferences.

We have prepared separate chapters concerning our views about school programs, standards, principles of learning and instruction, and the goals of education. Comments which follow here, therefore, are directed towards programs, or features about school operations that, judging from the concerns expressed in submissions to the Commission and based on research reported in the literature, are problematic from the perspective of the learner. Included are: special education programs, English as a second language programs, Native education programs, second language programs other than English, and programs for the non-academic pupil.

Special Education Programs

The variety of special education programs provided in the public schools is evident in *Table 12*. The submissions to the Commission that we have analyzed in Chapter 1 express satisfaction with most of these programs. Many submissions call for a greater degree of integration or mainstreaming, but only as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. A few briefs, however, express concern that school officials will mainstream special needs learners when the evidence would indicate that segregation would be more appropriate. The overriding theme is that all learners should receive their schooling in the least restrictive environment and that the decision as what would be the least restrictive environment should be made either in consultation with or by the learner's parents.

The issue of mainstreaming or integration is complex. Parents of the gifted argue that gifted learners should have a range of options from enrichment in a regular classroom to separate classes and, where numbers permit, separate schools. Parents of and societies for the severely mentally-handicapped suggest that normalization of behaviour is more easily achieved through integration in the regular classroom, and parents of the mildly handicapped adolescents request that their children be permitted to remain in a segregated training school. Advocates for the hearing and visually impaired call for mainstreaming and differ with respect to the best methodology to be employed. All believe that the teachers of their children require specialized training and that no limit should be placed on the resources required to meet the needs of their special needs youngster so that the learner's full potential can be realized.

Teachers express concern that where special needs learners are mainstreamed, the other pupils may be put at a disadvantage unless the teacher is given adequate material and personnel support. Nonetheless, two recent studies conducted in British Columbia regarding attitudes towards handicapped learners in segregated and mainstreamed settings indicate that attitudes are more positive where handicapped learners are partially or fully mainstreamed (integrated). A recommendation that arises from these studies is that inservice programs directed at influencing the attitudes of teachers, learners, and parents would alleviate the psychological barriers to integration (Winzer & Rose, 1986, Rose & O'Connor, 1988).

The nature of resources required for integration should be determined by careful analysis of the needs of learners. Our understanding of the literature and the advice that we have been given is that the use of paraprofessionals working under the guidance of fewer highly qualified teachers would be more cost efficient and equally effective compared to programs that require a large number of highly specialized and credentialled teachers.

As can be seen in *Table 12*, the special programs with the greatest growth rate are those designed for the learning disabled. Concern with the level of service and the success of programs provided to these learners is the subject of many of the submissions to the Commission. Concerns expressed include the imposition of an artificial cap on the proportion of school enrolment that a district may identify as being severely learning disabled, the lack of specially trained teachers for the learning disabled, the general failure to identify learning disabled pupils in their first few years of schooling, and the failure to provide suitable programs for learners identified as having a learning disability.

The Metropolitan Supervisors and Directors of Special Education, in a meeting with us, indicated that the recognition of and creation of programs for the learning disabled is a recent occurrence in that many districts did not have programs for these learners until a few years ago. Furthermore, they pointed out that there is a recurring problem concerning definition. There is no unambiguous definition of what constitutes a severe learning disability, nor is there clear professional agreement over what needs to be included in effective educational programs for these learners.

The supervisors and directors seemed confident that over time identification and program concerns would dissipate as programs and practices are refined. However, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education researcher Jim Cummins points out that ambiguities and inconsistencies in some of the core concepts underlying administrative and instructional responses to the needs of these learners are of questionable value. He states that investigators argue convincingly "that if the construct of a 'learning disability' cannot be satisfactorily defined, it cannot possibly be identified and remediated...and that the early identification process may become self-fulfilling and actually help create the learning problems it was intended to offset." (Cummins, 1984, p. 80). Responses to the issues concerning these learners, therefore, should be made with care and with reference to research findings rather than to emotive arguments.

English as a Second Language Programs

Another high growth area is in programs for pupils requiring English as a Second Language . This growth is a direct reflection of the growth of British Columbia's immigrant population which, while distributed throughout the province, is concentrated in the Greater Vancouver region.

According to Census Canada, in 1986 there were 2,883,370 people living in British Columbia. This constituted approximately 11.4% of the Canadian population. Of these nearly 3 million people, 80.9% had English as a mother tongue (compared to 60.6% nation-wide), 1.3% had French (compared to 24.3% nation-wide), and 14.4% had a non-official language as a mother tongue. Those with non-official languages as a mother tongue included 2.9% Chinese, 2.8% German, 1.3% Punjabi, 0.9% Italian, 0.8% Dutch, and 5.7% other languages. The remainder of the population reported multiple responses for mother tongue. In terms of settlement patterns, in 1986 13% of the immigrants to Canada settled in British Columbia and 9% settled in Vancouver. Although these numbers might seem high, they are lower than previous years. The proportion of immigrants settling in British Columbia and Vancouver has declined approximately 4.5% and 2.5%, respectively, between 1981 and 1986. Finally, it appears that immigration has shifted from primarily European to primarily non-European, from less educated to more educated and more entrepreneurial, and from a few major source countries to a wider range of source countries.

Several of the submissions to the Commission express concerns that support for learners whose mother tongue is not English is inadequate. They claim that the Ministry of Education provides extra funding for only three years despite research evidence which indicates that these learners require extra support for up to seven years before they acquire fluency with the English language sufficient to work with ease in a school setting (Myles,1987; Cummins,1984). However, it us our understanding based on discussions with senior officials at the Ministry of Education that there is no requirement concerning a three year limit and that extra funds are available as long as there is a demonstrated need for extra assistance to these learners. It appears, therefore, that funding rules require clarification.

Native People

A third area of concern is for Native education programs. As can be seen in *Table 12*, Native learners represent approximately 3% of the total public school enrolment. Submissions made by several native groups contain common themes. First they state that they have lost a generation of traditional parenting and child rearing and opportunities for family based education involving the extended family. This disruption was due to policies which removed Native children from their homes and placed them in residential schools which were insensitive to the Native ways. Second, they claim that they must be given the resources and the support to reclaim their heritage—their language, their culture, their lands. They also ask that resources be provided for the support of families and for the development of effective parenting techniques—techniques lost because of policies imposed on the Native people. Third, they believe that the Native learner must be given access to adult Natives as models and to learning environments that are sensitive to

the Native way. Finally, they wish to have greater say in the policies and programs to which they now send their children. In particular, they wish to have greater control over the funds granted to school districts in support of Native education. Only then, they claim, can they begin to realize the vision they have for their children; that is an education which equips their children with the knowledge and skills requisite to survival and success in the broader society while still being proud of their Native heritage. They also envisage an economic base in the regions owned by the Natives so that their children may, if they so desire, return to live and work with their own people.

The problems are complex in nature. In a study conducted by School District 24 (Kamloops) comparing Native learners with non-Natives, the following generalizations are evident. On all academic and aptitude measures, at all grade levels, the Native learners score lower than their non-Native counterparts. The difference between the two groups is greater at the higher grades than at the lower. Also, the Native students have enrolled in many more schools than have the non-Natives, and the social and family problems faced by these learners are far greater than is the case for the general society.

Not surprisingly, then, a greater percentage of the Native students are receiving failing grades. What is surprising though is that a smaller proportion are enrolled in special education programs or are receiving learning assistance. A greater percentage are, however, enrolled in non-academic programs that do not lead to completion of provincial graduation requirements. Few Native students are failed in the elementary years and the failure rate is held down by placement of the learners in non-academic programs in the secondary grades. Absence rates and mobility rates are significantly higher for the Native students.

Generally, Native people are lumped together when Native education is discussed. It is assumed by many that the similarities among Native people far outweigh the differences among them. This might be true in some respects, but it is clearly not true in others. In total, at the time of the Kamloops study (September 1987) there were 739 Native students in the district (about 4% of the total enrolment) of whom 335 were status Natives (about 2% of the total enrolment). Status Natives belonged to a total of 45 Bands and another 23 Native Bands were represented by these Native students. Diversity is obviously an important attribute of these people. The implications of the newly framed master tuition agreement for districts like Kamloops should be obvious. Satisfactory solutions are not likely to result from negotiations among such a large and diverse group of Native people and school boards. Native control of financial matters is highly unlikely when agreements must be reached between each band and the school district.

One thing is clear: the public school system to date has not had much success at enabling the Native learner to succeed in schooling. Perhaps the findings of researchers investigating family parenting practices and success in school are of relevance here. Perhaps also, the time has come to permit Native people to assume more responsibility for the education of their children, thus enhancing their desire to reclaim their lost heritage and parenting patterns and their desire to assist their children to live with pride and dignity in the future.

Second Language Programs other than English

Second language programs in British Columbia schools are few in number. In order of size of enrolment as of September, 1986, they include: French as Second Language (184,534), French Immersion (18,885), German as a Second Language (3,645), Spanish as a Second Language (2,494), Program Cadre (1,752), Latin (497), Japanese (203),Mandarin (40), Italian (17), and Russian (14). In total these 212,081 pupils constitute 43% of the total 1986 enrolment, and approximately 97% of these pupils are enrolled in French language programs.

Submissions to the Commission indicate a high desire on the part of parents for all learners to have opportunity to learn a second language. French is the language mentioned most often because Canada is a country with two official languages, and the belief is held by many that job opportunities will be greatly enhanced if a person is bilingual. The largest enrolments are in French as a Second Language, with the numbers almost equally divided between elementary and secondary programs. French Immersion programs are also very popular. However, some people have expressed concern that there are significant limitations to the extent to which French Immersion programs can expand to include all who wish to enroll in such programs, and with respect to the ability of districts to supervise these programs to en-

sure quality. Concern is also expressed about the lack of clear provincial policy regarding the status of language programs except as an elective at the secondary school level.

All elementary French Language programs are considered by the Ministry of Education to be locally developed programs, and they are highly dependent upon Federal grants. Also, the quality of the French as a Second Language elementary programs is questionable as they are often taught by interested generalist teachers who have little or no training as teachers of French as a Second Language. In work prepared for the Commission, Stan Shapson has suggested that attempts to enhance or enrich the offering of core French programs in the schools might take into account several factors. First, parents have different expectations for their children's linguistic competence, which require different types of second language programs. Realistic linguistic objectives must be set for French-as-a-second-language and these must be communicated to parents. Second, it must be remembered that parental perceptions of the apparent ineffectiveness of FSL in Quebec was a contributing factor to the development of alternate second language programs such as French Immersion. Third, immersion emphasizes the communicative use of French. This approach to second language learning is important because many areas where immersion is offered (for example, British Columbia) are in an English speaking milieu which affords learners little opportunity to use French outside of school. If FSL is to be revitalized, it must allow for more than the formal study of French. Fourth, in secondary schools FSL usually takes on the orientation of a highly academic subject and enrolment drops off when it is no longer compulsory. This has to be addressed if we want second language learning to be accessible and suitable for all students. Fifth, innovative opportunities to combine Core French with late immersion and/or exchange programs should be actively pursued.

Programs for the Non-Academic Student

The final major concern with the secondary school programs to be discussed here is the status of the non-academic student. Many of the briefs indicate that students in courses that are not designed for university entrance are given frequent messages which imply that they are of less status and that the subject of their learning is of less value. These students are seen to be enrolled in these non-academic courses by reason of failure rather than by choice. As a result, many of the courses that are practical in nature and that have great potential benefit to all learners are shunned by higher achievers.

What seems to be needed is a clearer definition of the concepts vocational and academic learner. All learners should be assisted with their vocational development just as all require intellectual development. Perhaps a reorganizing of the secondary schools into fewer areas of study with each area being designed to assist the learner with both intellectual and vocational development would be of benefit. It should be perfectly acceptable not to want to attend university. All vocations require people with talent. Students should enter vocations by choice rather than after failure at attempts to gain entry to preparation programs for other vocations.

Related to the problems with image for the vocational student is the problem of streaming or tracking by ability. This practice is common in the schools of British Columbia although it has not been officially sanctioned. As we have demonstrated above, students who come from family and community backgrounds that are not supportive of the goals of schools are likely to be less prepared to succeed at school than their more advantaged peers. Often these differences are associated with ethnicity as well as economic advantage. One result of the combined effects of background characteristics of learners and the practice of tracking in schools is often that schools, especially secondary schools, are divided not only on ability lines but also on ethnic lines. For example, Native people informed the Commission of the fact that their children were almost entirely in lower tracks. These comments were substantiated by our interviews with a small sample of students in British Columbia schools, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Educators often claim that such grouping practices enable them to attend to individual differences more effectively, yet they generally oppose the segregation of the gifted learners on the basis of resisting elitism and loss of models of talented and high achievers for other learners. Also the evidence found in the research literature indicates that learners placed in mixed ability groupings, when taught by means of suitable instructional methods such as cooperative learning strategies, are not penalized. Rather, the high ability learners learn just as well as if they were in segregated groups and lower achievers achieve at a significantly higher level (Goodlad, 1984; Meehan, 1983). More is said about this matter in the section on learning and teaching.

Enrolment data available from the Ministry of Education for September 1986 indicate that 19,936 secondary school pupils were enrolled in work-experience programs. Most of these pupils are in Grades 11 and 12 because Workers' Compensation regulations require a person to be over the age of 15 in order to be in the workplace. It appears, therefore, that about 27% of the Grade 11 and 12 enrolment is in some form of work-related education. These figures are actually somewhat high when one considers the many barriers to effective career education that exist in secondary schools. For example, the British Columbia School Counsellors Association reports that career education and counselling in secondary schools is haphazard. A number of factors are related to this problem, such as restrictions in choices available to students due to the number of required courses students must take along with the effect of University entrance requirements. As well, the administrative duties required of counsellors occupies time otherwise available to students and teachers. The relative lack of effective career counselling is reflected in many of the submissions to the Commission by parents who have recommended increased attention to career education and counselling.

Vocational education should become a part of general education for everyone. Vocational education programs should start as a part of common education and be followed by opportunities to specialize. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (O.E.C.D., 1979, 1983), learners who have had relatively less difficulty in making the transition from school to stable employment live in countries which have had extensive arrangements for initial training in enterprises, notably Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The O.E.C.D. recommends that preparation for working life in a broad sense should be part of the foundations of a life-time career and contribute to the development of competences, qualities and attitudes which enable individuals to be effective and adaptable in the face of change. As such, preparation for participation in the economic life of the community should be one of the basic purposes of education, particularly of compulsory schooling. Also recommended by O.E.C.D.is a greater emphasis on career counselling along with a closer link with the business community.

Conclusion

Schools have been and will be expected to play a large role in preparing the learner for the future. They have access to the learner for only 3% of the learners' awake lifetime, yet they will be and are currently being held accountable for having a dramatic impact on the quality of life of the province's citizens. Essentially, the education system is expected to serve all learners between the age of 5 and 16. At age 16, those who drop out will have no educational credential. At present, only the academically successful are accorded high status, for it is they who will attend university and have the chance of obtaining an advanced degree. Degrees bring status and reward, and provide a ticket to the more desirable jobs and lifestyles. Parents, teachers, and peers reinforce the goal of attaining a degree. To strive for less is to admit failure. Yet only 30% or more of the learners of British Columbia will attend colleges and universities and only 19% of them will obtain a degree.

College and university are not the answer for the 70% or so who do not go on to study after they leave high school. These learners, when young, often share the same goals as those who do go on to post-secondary studies. But they fall behind. They get streamed into basic or non-academic programs. What, then, becomes of their goals? What do they see for their future?

Everyone needs a goal. Everyone needs a dream. These learners are encouraged by parents and teachers alike to stay in school to better equip themselves for gaining a job—a job that will not necessarily exist, despite government funded programs and despite improved programs for the non-academic learner. We must find ways to help these young people select a goal to strive for. Work study programs, co-op programs and other such programs are all useful, but they will not be enough. We need a clearer vision as to what should be the goals of the education system of British Columbia. We need to develop positions in the workplace to which the young may aspire. We need to assist families to provide the necessary nurture without making these families dependent upon the state. We need to create new school programs for the non-academic that will be seen to be valuable in their own right, not simply a second-best alternative for those who fail to gain what is seen to be more worthwhile. Parents, teachers, employers and learners all need to reassess what education is about and where the schools fit into the larger scheme of things.

3. "Well, If You Ask Me...": The Learner in Profile

by Carol Munro

Introduction

In this section of the Report you will be introduced to learners who represent various sectors of the learner community in British Columbia at this time. They describe how they spend their days, what they think is important, and they talk about their goals. What they say produces a portrait of the learners in our classrooms.

There are eight groups of learners described in this section, each with a "Profile Learner" who speaks for the group and who reflects the modal characteristics of the group members. The eight Profiles are fictional creations based on the information given by students and parents in interviews with the Royal Commission. 63 students, as well as at least one of their parents were interviewed, for approximately an hour and a half each. They were asked to describe a typical day, and were encouraged to talk about their schoolwork, their friends, and their lives in general. School records/reports and the tapes of the interviews provided further input for the preparation of the Profiles. Each interview was transcribed, and from the texts of the interviews, models for the Profiles were developed. Each interview was analyzed for at least 48 common elements ranging from the time of arising in the morning to the learner's favourite school Intro subjects. There were typically six learners in each group, and the Profile emerged as the analyses for each learner were compared. The objective was to present a "living" portrait of each group, through the persona of the Profile Learner. Thus the Profiles were created.

The Profile Learners are themselves inventions. What they say, and how they say it, reflects the tone common to the interviewees and their parents within each group. Where the information did not readily consolidate into a common pattern, the Profile Learner talks to, or about, other learners in the group, allowing illumination of characteristics which, while not reflecting the modal life of the group, were significant features within the group.

The Profile Learner speaks in the first person. In this way the voice has the fresh and immediate living quality of the interviews, and there would seem to be little outside "third voice" interference with what the Learner has to say. So, the setting for each Profile is a fictional interview, with the Learner doing all the talking. Each Profile is "wrapped" by a third-person commentary in two parts. The Summary, at the beginning of the Profile, outlines the group and introduces the Profile Learner. The Conclusion, at the end of the Profile, presents observations on patterns among these learners and their attitudes towards their education.

For purposes of dividing the Learners into groups which are readily identifiable in the school system, eight categories were assigned. These had to do with the length of time the learner had been in the British Columbia school system (ie. whether or not the learner is a recent immigrant/ESL student or a member of a third-generation Canadian family); what degree of educational "advantage" the learner has (ie. whether or not the learner's family assigns a high priority to education, and whether or not other family members have completed high school or post-secondary education). Also taken into account were learners whose educational life is affected in some way by the fact that they are members of visible minorities.

The eight Profile Learners and their groups are identified as follows:

1. Indigenous Canadians. These learners are the Indian students in the system. ENID is their Profile Learner.

2. Heritage Canadians. These learners come from families which have been in Canada for three or more generations. The Profile Learner for the High Advantage Group is KELLY. The Profile Learner for the Low Advantage Group is ARDIS.

3. Visible Minority. These learners may have been born in Canada themselves, but their parents emigrated here. The group identifies learners who are in some respect visibly different from the majority of learners in their age group. The Profile Learner for the High Advantage Group is WALTER. And for the Low Advantage Group in this category, SIMON is the Profile Learner.

4. New Canadians. This category includes learners who have themselves been immigrants to Canada. The High Advantage Profile Learner is SAM. GURWA is the spokesperson for the Low Advantage group of New Canadians.

5. Independent Schools. This final group characterizes a type of learning situation more than a specific group of learners. The Profile Learner for this group is in fact two voices: JAMIE, who represents the High Advantage learner, and DANA, who speaks for the disadvantaged learners in the independent schools of the province. Their two voices are combined in one Profile.

Like all profiles, these are simplified outlines of dominant patterns. Individual differences are not highlighted, in the interests of creating a "type" of learner whose values, needs and views can be recognized as distinct from the values, views and needs of other groups of learners. Consequently, the Profile Learners' remarks must be understood in general, so that the group flavour can be appreciated. It is the primary purpose of the Profiles to flesh out the data presented in other sections of the report. These are extrapolations of the living people who experience being learners within our school system.

INDIGENOUS CANADIAN

Summary

Enid is the profile student for this group. Although she is 16, she has completed schoolwork to only Grade 9 at this point. Like the others in her group, she has repeated at least one grade of school. She thinks it would be a good thing to finish high school, because she can hope to get a better job than if she is a dropout. She isn't sure if she will finish, but she does think it would be a good idea to do so.

These students see many examples of undesirable outcomes of dropping out and of getting into drugs and liquor. They know at least one person who has a serious drinking problem. Some of their friends are already dead; others bear permanent damage from injuries they received in car accidents caused by drunken driving. Many have friends or relatives in jail for misdemeanors related to drugs, alcohol and other offenses. They all know people who will work at menial, low-paying, insecure jobs because they did not have high school completion.

They come from large families where there is an average of 6 children, plus 1 or 2 "adopted" cousins or grandchildren. The extended family is an important element in their lives; in a situation where an unwed Native Indian mother cannot care for Native Indian her child, her own mother or aunt will take the Native Indian child on an informal semi-permanent basis. Similarly, children of broken homes and orphans are scooped up into the larger family unit, and call their aunts or grandmothers "Mother."

Most of these youngsters live on Reserves. This means that their homes are far away from their schools. Bus rides consume up to three hours a day, and because of the distances involved, these youngsters are not part of the extracurricular programs at their schools. They also do not have ready access to resources such as the public library, although some of the Reserves are establishing study centres to help the youngsters complete their homework with adequate guidance and resources. These programs are mainly in the planning stages, however, and have not been of much use to the students in this present group. Enid has heard of them, and there is one on her Reserve, but she says it's for the younger kids and wouldn't be any help to her.

Their days are filled with commuting, socializing, passive presence in classes, family chores and undefined leisure time. If they watch much tv they are unaware of the time spent doing so. As a group, they claim that they don't watch/don't like tv. They prefer listening to tapes, mostly heavy metal music. Many do say that they watch the tv news, though, and the sitcom "Cheers" seemed to have a fair audience among this group.

As for goals, these youngsters think that if they finish high school they would like to become mechanics, bus drivers, waitresses, or daycare workers; some aspire to be secretaries, or to join the police or the army. They all have older siblings who have not finished school. Many of these are unemployed. Given what they can see around them, the prognosis for these learners is not good. They are marked, however, by a distinctive confidence about themselves as learners: although they may repeatedly fail class assignments, they talk enthusiastically about their ability to succeed if they really want to apply themselves...and they pull out anecdotes which tell of sudden "A's" in Math (after failing all year) to prove the point. And the point seems to be that in spite of their performance, their confidence is enormous, and if they have a shot at the brass ring at all, it may be on the basis of this faith in their ability to do what they want to do.

ENID

Yeah. Hi, I'm Enid. Is this where I'm supposed to come for the interview? O.K. I'm kinda late I guess...we woke up at about (pause), eight...yeah, about eight, 'cause my alarm clock broke, eh? It dropped at night and I didn't bother fixing it, so we kinda missed the bus, 'cause the bus comes at seven. And I got a ride to town...well....we got up at eight and I washed my hair and Mom reminded me that I had to talk with you guys. She goes, "you'd better get into town. You'd better ask one of the people if they're going to town. You can get a ride with them." And so I told her "Okay". And I washed my hair and I blow dried it. And I went out, and there's this one guy. His name is Ralph. He's from Prince George. He comes to the Reserve every now and then. He's, like, a preacher? So I went and asked him, and he says he's probably goin' in about eleven. So I said "well, forget it. I ain't goin' to wait around when I can get a ride sooner than that. So I go over to Jeanie's eh? Jeanie says "Yeah, John is". 'Cause she has to have a, a—ultrasound, see, 'cause she's goin' to have a baby, and doctors have to do some sort of x-rays and things like that on her. So we came into town about, um eleven forty-five? And I just went up to my room, 'cause there's only fifteen minutes of class left, and at noon I went up and I had a coffee at the Burger King. Uh, Shelley and I, a friend of mine. We sat for a while. Then go cash my cheque. And we came back to school. If I weren't talking to you, I'd be in the special class for this hour, and then I don't do nothing until 2:30, and then that's Art.

The special class? Oh, that's for Math. Actually I did pretty excellent on the test yesterday. I don't believe it. Oh, wow. I mean, like some days I'm not really into doing it, school work, eh. Like, it's just, it just doesn't seem to get into my mind, but I have to kind of force it. But I can't really force it, otherwise I wouldn't want to do it—do you know what I mean? (laughs) Okay. And I only got one wrong on this sheet with about twenty questions, and it's hard stuff. So it was pretty excellent. I couldn't believe my eyes. I must have been really listening to him yesterday, 'cause I was kind of half-dazed, eh? And he was telling me how to do this and how to do that, and later on I thought to myself, "now what did we just talk about?". But then I remembered everything he said, I mean I was just sitting there so spun-no-looking, you know what I mean? (laughs) Oh well. Anyways. I did that. Like, when I want something in, I try to concentrate, but not too hard, because I found out that when I 'm really trying to take something in, it goes in, but, I don't know—in my subconscious mind I can't replace it back again. So just try to sit there normal and just try to listen and sorta—I look around, right? I look at the board and I look around, listening to the teacher.

Anyways. That's some of the time. School...well, school. I don't really like it because I don't do much in school. I don't do the homework, like sometimes I will, but most of the time I just sit in my room with the radio on and a book

propped up so if anyone comes in it looks like I'm doing homework, but really I'm reading or just thinking. Sometimes I'm sleeping. (laughs) I don't listen to the teacher most of the time because I usually have a Walkman anyway. Woodworking is okay, and Metalwork was good. I got pulled out of Science, 'cause like I failed it three times, like one after the other. I couldn't understand it. I mean if you asked me what the moon is made out of, I couldn't tell you because I wouldn't know, and that's the first thing they tell you in science.. And I'm supposed to take sewing, but I just skip that one...my hands weren't made to sew, and you can't make them.

They should have some video games here. That'd be okay, eh? So what we do instead is go to Rainbow Arcade—in the Mall, you know? It's real close to the school, and all my friends are there, like guys who've dropped out, so I don't see them in school. So we hang out there, have something to eat, talk, fool around. It's good, you know. Hear what's happening, who's got trouble, that sort of stuff.

Yeah. A lotta kids got trouble. I hang out with a bunch you might say's kinda wild, I guess. Lotta parties, like have a few for sure, you know...some drugs, too. They do, anyhow. Not me, man. I tried all that, but I quit it again when I was 14. Like you can't make anything of your life with that stuff. My brother, Ray? He rolled his car last year after a party, killed his wife. So now where is he? Twenty years old. Like nothin' left, eh? Just the baby, that Mom has at our place now. My Mom's first husband died in a vehicle accident, too. Drunk. Car rolled on him. My Dad too. Same way.

Actually I'm glad my mom doesn't have him anymore...like that was five, six years ago, eh? He use to beat her and she don't do nothin' eh? Like just not talk back or anything. Just drink some more, fall asleep after a while. I used to worry so much I get sick, listen to him hit her and she cryin'. My sister...that's Gail, that's next up from me...she's 16...and me, we used to hide under the bed or outside and wait until he went away. Then for a time he was gone, but he only came back when he was drunk, and beat up on her again. She'd stopped drinking any more by then, and he didn't like that. After he died, Gail ask Mom what you gonna do now? Mom just told her, "You don' need no man to raise kids." I guess Gail learn from Mom...I hope so, anyways. She's pregnant herself now, expecting her first baby next month. She decided she will wait with the baby some time, then go back, finish her school if she got the time. She lives with us, work part-time waitressing in town. It's really hard, a long way into town and back, and sometimes she just have to stay there.

We live on the Reserve. Silver Tree Reserve. It's off the highway, about thirty miles north of town. You turn off there and drive in a ways till you come to it. Anyways, we live there, my Mom, and five kids and me...well, six kids altogether that're hers. And just now we got two little cousins kinda adopted for awhile, and Mom's grandson, that's Ray's baby. And pretty soon Gail's baby too. So there's lots to do with all those people. Gail and me cook a lot. Mom's not very well a lot of the time, so we try to help out...make her last, you know? (laughs) Weekends we clean the place. That's like wash the walls, throw out all the junk, do the clothes and stuff. And then we make sure Grandmother's okay every day, too. She had a stroke and can't do much now, so someone looks in on her, like she's kind of at the centre of where everyone lives, so there's always an aunt or a cousin to look in.

Anyhow, that's what we do. Grandmother speaks Cree, no English, so that makes it hard for the kids. Mom speaks Cree and a little bit of English. But us, well, what're we gonna do to get jobs with Cree, eh? Like one of the guys, Bob...he's gonna go away to take a heavy duty auto mechanics course and get himself a job in some town somewhere own his own business. Get away from the Reserve...he says, "so what good to me to speak Indian? How this gonna help me when I phone Japan, fer godssake?" I know a few words, but not much. We have this cat, my Mom gave it an Indian name. I can't even pronounce it! (laughs) So I just call it Jake. It comes okay when I call it, so I guess that's all right. When Mom calls it by that Indian name, it just looks at her and goes on eating. I guess it would make more sense to me...to keep up with the Indian language, I mean...if there was like some program in the school. Native studies or something like that. Learn about what we're like. White kids, too, find out what it's like to be native, what we do and stuff. Learn the language. Why not? And I guess it would be kind of nice, when we go to some of Mom's relatives and visit other bands, maybe speak a little of the language. Now the kids just walk outside and hang around, talk, go to the mall or the arcade, don't see much sense in the old things, the ceremonies. Anyways, that's how I see it.

When I'm in town, like I said, I hang around with friends, yack a lot. My Mom says I'll have to get a job that let's me talk, 'cause I'm always yakking. I think it'd be a good idea to finish school, and maybe I can. Right now, things don't look too bad, like I'm not failing everything. But it gets really hard from now on. That's what the kids say. And

a lot of guys just drop out and they get good jobs, eh? Like one guy is working in the gas station, and another, this girl, she got a job at the IGA, not cashing or anything, but she's gets paid okay. A lot of the guys try to get on at the mill. Ray's had his name in there for a long time, just waitin' to try it. But me, I figure if I can get finished with the high school that'd be good. A lot of guys think they'll go back and finish later. That's what Gail's gonna do. But it's hard, you know. You got a family and a job and it's thirty-plus miles to town, if you even get a job as close as town...and then to try to go to school on top of all that? Puts you low on the totem pole, doesn't it? (laughs)

Actually, I'd like to be a cop, if you really want to know. But I'll sure have to finish school first for that! We'll see. But it'd be good, eh? Like, I'd like to work here, you know...not go away, like Bob and them. They say to me, "how can you stay on this little reserve?" I just tell them, "I been living here for fifteen years, so I guess I'm just used to it." I mean, I like just talking with people, like guys like Bob and Maureen and others. Some of the dropouts...talk with them about how life takes them and all this stuff, eh? 'Cause I like to get into this stuff. It's pretty interesting. And I get along with them real good. With my brothers and sisters too. 'Cause I think the main thing is to get to know your brothers and sisters, because you know when they've got a problem...because they have "that look" on their face. I go crazy when I have a problem...but every time I have a problem or something, it's like it's sad at the beginning, but at the end it's always happy. So it's been like that for me. So anyways, I might be a cop. I mean you gotta get a goal and go for it...fight for something in this life, I mean things won't just come into your hands. Like I'm sitting here, eh, and a police officer or the mayor won't come in here and say, "Enid, you're a cop". I mean it's not that easy.

Conclusion

Enid and the other learners in this group have strong community ties. Their home base has remained stable for a long time, and their family constellation is anchored by the presence of relatives (aunts, uncles and, grandparents) living on the same Reserve. The influence of band elders and band Councils is an important one in family life.

As a group, these youngsters are passive learners. Classes happen to them, and grades fall upon them. Although, as Enid indicates, the will to succeed is a first step to achieving a goal, aggressiveness in the classroom is not characteristic of these youngsters.

What figures largely in their lives is their association with other people, family and friends in particular. Each of the members of Enid's group has natural counselling skills, which perhaps are part of their cultural programming. They are listeners, supporters, advisors, crying posts, philosophers. Other youngsters come to them with worries about fights, deaths, violence, drugs and drunkenness. What will I do?, they ask. And Enid, like the others in this group, listens, thinks, recalls what she can from her own vast and varied experience of life...or goes to her mother: "What should I say?", she asks. And her mother, replying, lends her broader experience and wisdom for Enid's use.

HERITAGE CANADIAN — HIGH ADVANTAGE

Summary

The learners in this group enjoy a life in which economic and cultural/social acceptance are taken for granted. There are some "hard parts" in life just now, but these are temporary and are associated mainly with the onset of puberty and with adolescent assertion of independence. By and large, their home and school lives have produced stable, confident young persons.

The majority of these learners do quite well in school. School is interesting to them, although the interest is related mainly to social activities and the situation school provides for increased social encounters. Where else can young people find more peers assembled regularly in one place at one time with physical facilities designed specifically to throw them together and to provide activities for them? Their potential as learners is very good. Teachers' comments indicate that where the students' interest is captured by the curriculum, a first-rate performance is possible. In subjects

where there is no innate interest, however, these learners show a shortfall of self-discipline in their work, and their grades suffer accordingly.

Kelly is one of these learners. When Kelly feels that the work is irrelevant or uninteresting, performance falls. If there is not sufficient rapport with the teacher, Kelly does not "soldier on." Like the others in the group, Kelly sees school as an end in itself, rather than as a means to a long-range goal. Many of these learners express platitudes about school preparing them for life/work/a better future. The Present is too dominant in their lives, however, for them to overlook it in the interests of hypothetical future rewards.

They do believe that it is important to graduate, and they believe that there is a direct link between education and financial success. At the moment, Kelly's career goal is a little vague, but it involves university as a logical extension of public school. It is a little difficult to separate in Kelly's remarks the threads of genuine personal expression from the general texture of parental and peer philosophies. For instance, we can't be sure that Kelly really wants to go to university: what we hear from Kelly might well be the equivalent of the knee-jerk response to the question, "are you a good boy?"; the answer is, "of course." In this respect it is probably useful to note that in Kelly there has been cultivated a set of views which are consistent with progressing on to higher education, with the goal of a professional career which will yield a high level of economic comfort in the future. These are Kelly's expressed expectations. Whether or not they are accurate reflections of the private individual is not apparent.

So important is school as a social crucible that Kelly describes the days in terms of activities around, but not in, the classroom. These youngsters describe their lives such that school is at the centre of their lives, but it is clear that the curriculum and their studies are impediments they must endure along the way to what really matters to them. One talks of "putting in time" at school; another says "I get up, and then there's school." Yet the school environment, with the shelter it offers from the "outside world," is highly valued. These youngsters know that they can be accepted here and that they have only a limited time to enjoy this freedom from responsibility. In the safety of the little world of the school they feel free to explore their own individuality without fear of falling off the edge and losing human contact: safe risks. One boy practises being a solitary individual; another turns up in his "fallout clothes" and spiked hair; another joins everything in order to be different. Kelly sees being different as a desirable trait, a state to be sought and earned. There are risks in going too far, but Kelly feels too safe in this setting to fear becoming an outcast. None of these kids does drugs or drinks. They don't smoke. They don't have gang or get into trouble. They aren't discipline problems at home or at school. They belong. They go to church, take part in youth programs, and make some personal commitment to a private involvement in music, or sports. Socially they are conformists, and among their friends they enjoy a high profile without being group leaders.

KELLY

Okay. Yesterday I got up at about six-thirty and I got ready and I ate breakfast...and I always have a good breakfast because my Mom makes me. And then I went to basketball at eight. And then at nine school started. And yesterday was Thursday, right? ...No, Tuesday. Okay, so then we went through school. Okay, and at lunch I just ate lunch and I went out to play and we just stood around the four square thing talking with my friends, and then school was out. So then I went to "Babysitters'", 'cause I'm taking advanced Babysitters (course). And then I went out to a movie (at the nearby university campus).

My name is Kelly. I'm thirteen years old—actually I'll be fourteen in just a few months—and I'm in Grade 9. Do I like school? I guess so. It's not a problem for me, and there's lots to do, so—yeah, I guess I like it fine.

I have lots of friends at school, not very many old friends but some good ones that I've made since we all came to this school in Grade 8. That was a big change! Elementary school seems so easy, now. It's really important to have a group, now, and to be part of the popular group. I'm pretty lucky, I guess, because I'm with a group that's okay...like everyone thinks they're nice and they're popular but they're not crazy, you know? I mean they don't do weird stuff like dope or drinking or smoking or anything. And my two best friends are in the group too, so that's nice. One of them plays basketball and does school patrol with me. And the other studies piano, like I do. That one is really popular, and wears these really neat sort of far-out clothes. So, like I said, it was pretty hard at first, after all those years with just

the same group of kids, but it took—I guess a couple of weeks into Grade 8—and I started to feel like I fitted in, and now, of course it's okay. Actually I didn't find it too hard, you know.

I guess it helped that my mom is a teacher, too. I mean, she kind of told me what it would be like and how my friends would change and everything. She doesn't teach at my school. She teaches at my little sister's school across the road from our house. But of course she knows about all this stuff. My little sister is in Grade 6, and she's okay, I guess. Kid sister. She's actually kind of neat, and she's, you know, developing some personality now that she's growing up a bit...I mean from my point of view, you know. We do quite a bit together, I guess you could say. Like I help her with her homework sometimes, and we play computer games—actually, she's better at them than I am. She's a real study-nut, though....not like me. I like to get the stuff done and get onto other things. I kind of leave things to the last minute a bit, I guess....like projects and, oh yeah, note-taking, which I definitely Do Not Like. But I seem to manage, you know, I pass everything...well, more than pass, but not like my sister. She's like Honour Roll every day. But she's a good kid for a sister, and I guess we have a lot of fun together. She tells me stuff and asks me about things, and I like that.

My dad's a lawyer, in town. What can I say about him? Well, he was born in B.C., met my mom in university, dated, married, had me. What else? No, actually, we're quite a bit alike, my mom says. We talk a lot, and he tells me about his cases sometimes and I try to figure out what I would do if I were him. My mom says we both have analytical minds, and I guess that's what lawyers have to have, so they can argue well. I can argue pretty well...just ask my sister! My dad does lots of things with us. He and my mom sometimes come to our basketball games, and we usually ski on weekends in the winter. He likes music, too, and we listen to music a lot together. And sometimes we play the piano together downstairs...well I play: he just fools around. He's okay, you know...I'm pretty lucky, I guess. He and my mom think school's pretty important, and they're always telling me to work hard, but they're pretty good, and they'll help me with my homework, although most of the time I'd rather ask a friend...you know how it is. My parents don't go to the school much, not like Lara's mom, who's head of the Parent Advisory Committee. She's talking with the teachers all the time. My parents pretty much just leave me alone to make my own way.

What do we do all together as a family? Well, skiing, as I said. We go to visit relatives pretty often...I have some aunts and uncles and a grandma who all live about an hour away, so we see them a lot...you know, for dinner on the weekend or something like that. We go to movies sometimes, although I guess we watch videos more often than we go out to movies 'cause it costs so much for four people, you know. Go to the mall, do some shopping. I guess we go out for dinner maybe once a week. And talk. Yeah, we talk quite a bit to each other, you know like over dinner....what's your day been like? what'll we do tomorrow?...that sort of thing. We always have dinner together. Mom cooks it, well I help a bit sometimes. It's a real meal...I mean we all sit down and there's a beginning and a middle and an end to it. Not like breakfast, where sure we eat good stuff, but everyone's in a rush to get to different places.

So. My day. Well usually I get up at 7, unless there's basketball practice. Then it's earlier. Get dressed. Breakfast. Make my lunch...that's usually whatever I can make fast that my mom will let me get away with, so I take, say, an orange, a sandwich and maybe a juice. Not always, but mostly. Then bus or get a ride to school with my two best friends. I live about a mile from school, and they get picked up along the way. We get there just in time for first bell...or sometimes not quite in time, but anyhow we get there. Then there's school, and at lunch, as I told you, we hang out in the playground, talking, or maybe we walk downtown to buy something from the store. A pop or some chips. We can buy stuff at the canteen too, but it's, you know, neat to get away a bit, too, kind of walk off down the road like we were on our own and all.

Anyhow, then there's school and after that I usually go home, do some homework if I have any, do a little practice (piano), maybe take the dog for a walk or play computer games till suppertime. I have to set the table for dinner, and then there's dinner. My sister and I take turns putting the dishes in the dishwasher, and then I, well, finish my homework if I have any left and then maybe watch some tv 'til bedtime. I go to bed 9:30 most nights. I guess I do half-hour to an hour of homework on the average...you know, sometimes there's none, but other times there's a big project and you just work all day and night to get it finished. I guess I should be more organized. Spread it out a bit, but I always end up leaving something to the last minute it seems. TV: well, I guess I watch maybe ten hours a week. Hard to say. I like those shows like "Cosby"...funny shows, I guess they're pretty well all family shows. So they're my regulars, and then there's some stuff we watch together, well at least my mom and dad and I do...some Nature programs and things like that. Anyhow, ten, twelve hours a week is about right. I don't know.

I read some, too. Mostly I read when I go to bed. You know, I read for maybe half an hour before I go to sleep. I don't read as much as I did when I was younger. Don't know why, but I don't. My sister reads more than I do now. Anyhow, I like books about teenagers most of all, I guess. I used to read more sort of nature stories and kind of "family" books, you know, like "Little House" and adventure stuff. We go to the local library about once a month, and I find lots of things there. The school library is pretty good, too. So I guess I read quite a bit.

Outside school, well there's piano. I take lessons and I practice of course. I've done that for so long that it's just part of the routine, like going to school. And sometimes we play basketball against a team from another school. It's not really organized, you know. I mean I'm not, like on a school team, or anything like that. It's sort of, well you know, like house games, but sometimes we get together with a group from another school. The teachers will arrange it and it's kind of like team sports, but not a big deal. I like playing, but I'm not like, a jock, you know. Then sometimes I go to the mall with some friends. Maybe see a movie or just hang around and talk. See other kids. And there's Babysitters'. That's a course I take once a week so I can earn some money 'sitting when I'm finished. My mom wouldn't let me 'sit unless I took the course, and I guess it's pretty good. So I'll have some money to do stuff...I get an allowance every week, but this way I can buy some tapes, maybe some clothes, you know. And Sundays I usually go to church. Sometimes my folks go, and they got me started. They don't go any more, but I like to, and then there's a group of kids at the church, and we do things together. Sort of a youth group. One of the parents sponsors us, and we do projects to raise money for maybe a little dance or something. It's nice.

In school I guess my favourite subject is English. We're reading some good books that I really like this year, and our teacher, he really makes it come alive, you know. I mean, well, he just talks and you think you're there...in the book I mean. And he makes it all so real, like he tells you stuff about his life and it all fits into the action in the book and so you feel that you've been there too and then you kind of understand more what the writer is trying to say, you know? I can't explain it very well, but he gets us excited, so we don't mind trying a bit harder to figure out the stories. And he gives us neat projects, like pretend you're on a trip to the country where the story takes place, and write three letters home...one of them to your mom and dad, one to your sister or brother, and one to your best friend. So that you say, you know, different things to each one, and show how much you've learned from the book about the setting, you see. So I really like projects like that, and our teacher gets us all set up, you know, like he tells us what to do and gives us some hints, like you wouldn't tell your folks the same kind of things you'd tell your friend, and then he gives us a schedule...like first drafts in by such and such a date, and it's all written on the board and then he says "GO". And we do. So I love that stuff. I mean, he doesn't make it easy, so it's a bit of a challenge. And that's the best part of the course. I guess I get my best grades from that teacher.

Math is different. Well, first of all, I'm just not as good at it, but like the teacher isn't so, well, lively. I guess it's not easy to be lively about Math, but like we do these worksheets and hand them in and do some problems while she marks the worksheets and then that class is over. So I don't get so interested, you know, and then I don't keep up like I should...always trying to catch up at the last minute on my homework Math and then I make mistakes and, well, it's just not my favourite subject. French is okay. I like that allright, I guess. I have to have it, so I guess I'd better like it. Anyhow, the best parts of that are where we get to talk to each other, like my friend and I can just sit and talk, quietly, you know, about ...well...anything, but it has to be in French. As long as we've got our worksheets or our reading or whatever we're doing that day in class all done. So we work pretty fast and get time to, like, just talk! And of course we're practicing our French too, so that's good. I guess it would be good if we had more, like "French Days", where we pretended we were in immersion and did all our work in French, but I guess that's sort of an enrichment program. They used to have that sort of thing at our school, but it went out a while ago. Anyhow, French is okay.

Now, what else? Oh, yeah. P.E. Well, P.E. is—P.E...like you have to do it, at least this year, and actually I quite like learning different sports, and I'm really quite lucky 'cause I'm pretty good at them mostly. My sister isn't. She falls over her feet and she's scared of being hit by the ball, that sort of thing. But I have good speed, and I'm pretty well coordinated. So I guess you'd say I do well in P.E., it's just not my fave subject...like I said before, you know, I'm not a jock. What else? Well, I take typing, so I'm getting pretty good with the word processor at home. That helps a lot. And that's just about it. So I'd say I'm sort of above-average as to grades, and I guess I could do better in some of my work, but I get along allright, and I like school, so I guess that's what's most important.

There are some changes they could make in the school. Like more chances to socialize and stuff like that...dances, games and things to bring people together. And like one of my friends says, it'd be nice if there were some enrichment

programs, too, in some of the subjects especially. I mean, I'm no brain, but I know that I could do better if I felt I had more challenge in some of the work. I sort of get ahead in Math and then I get bored and then I drift away and all of a sudden I've got mistakes and I'm behind, and....well, it isn't the greatest. This friend I've got says that there should be enrichment at both ends: she means that we spend too much time helping the people who have trouble learning the fundamental stuff, while the ones who can do the fundamentals should be allowed to get on with something else. I guess she's got a point. I kind of feel that way myself, sometimes. And another friend, he's really into music seriously...I mean, like I've studied piano forever, but it's not my life...well, he's taking his Grade Ten piano exams, and doing theory courses on his own and stuff...and he thinks that you should be able to get credits in school for work you do, like seriously, on your own outside. So, you see, he could get a theory block next year and do his own work in theory and get school credit for it. That'd be neat. School wouldn't seem so, sort of, well cut off from the real world then, would it. I mean, I really like it in some ways, but I can see how it would be useful to concentrate on the things you know you are going to stick with.

Now take me. I'm planning to finish school and then go to university. I think I'll be a lawyer, because, well, my dad's one and so I sort of know what it's like, and because it's a pretty good job. You can make a good living and have a nice home and travel, and when you retire you'll have enough money, maybe go live somewhere nice, you know. I may change my mind, but that's what I'm planning right now. So I have to keep my grades up enough to get into university, and that's all. And I guess as far as I'm concerned, school is getting me ready for that. I know for some of my friends, well, they don't feel that way. The guy who's into music, for example...like he feels that he needs more of an Arts and Culture kind of curriculum...Math and Science aren't much use to him. And I know that some of my friends would like to see more Counselling, like for jobs and careers...aptitude tests, you know, that sort of thing. Rita, this other girl, says that even though her marks are the best in the class that she's going to take a year out after she finishes high school because she just can't decide what she wants to do, and she doesn't know what she'd be good at. So she'd really like to have some help in that.

And I guess school kind of gets you ready for the world outside. I mean, it's really safe in here. You know everyone, and the expectations aren't too high, and if you flub it, well you can try again, and well, I know it won't be like that once we're out. And you learn how to get along, that's for sure. And how to do the things that will make other people like you enough. And how to put up with people you don't like. You learn that you have to do some things you don't like, too, if you want to get anywhere, and I guess that's pretty important, isn't it. And you learn about The World, you know, like issues and things: peace and hunger and the Third World and things we could do to make it better. I think that matters quite a bit. And, well, I don't really know, but I want to be able to vote, so I can have a part in the history, the electoral system. And when I'm nineteen I want to get really involved in getting people, Russia and the United States, to quit arguing and threatening to throw bombs at each other. And basically I want a peaceful world so nobody will be fighting.

So, I guess I'd say that school can lead you up to the future. Like, our, we're doing Positive Action, we have this program once a week for about 25 minutes. And our teacher put a chart on the board and said about money, how much money you would make in the future. Like if you just pass Grade 12 you'll get this much and only a chance of a job. This much chance. And if you just make it past Grade 12, this much, and when you get to university, two years of university, this much; three years, this much, four years...and that just turns something in, I think, almost everyone's minds about what they're going to do.... And, school...well, it's a good place to learn sports.

Conclusion

If learners like Kelly have problems, they are ones born of immaturity. Set in a stable environment, with a secure family and social network, Kelly encounters difficulties only in the realm of self-discipline. Impatient with tasks not readily understood, Kelly causes teachers to comment that more/better progress could be made if Kelly could concentrate on learning the missing pieces or on practising the faltering skill. No-one seems to think that Kelly lacks ability. Kelly, however, finds it hard to concentrate where interest does not ignite enthusiasm; accustomed to doing well in favourite subjects, it is hard for Kelly to attack tasks which do not come easily into control. And so far, life and circumstance have not demanded that preferences be set aside in the interest of obtaining longer-range or broader goals.

HERITAGE CANADIAN — LOW ADVANTAGE

Summary

The learners in this group could be described as being at war with the school system. Their parents do not have much education; in fact typically they will have dropped out of school at the end of junior high. Older brothers or sisters will have followed the same pattern. Consequently, the learners in this present group have grown up in environments where their school education is at best looked on as a necessary hurdle in their advancement to the real world of work; at worst, school is regarded as an impediment to getting on with the real business of life. Certainly school education is not thought of as enhancing the development of the individual, and only classes which have a direct and simple link to the job world are cited as having any worth in the eyes of these learners and their families.

Not surprisingly, they rate practical courses such as woodworking and typing as being far more important to their lives than Social Studies, the Sciences, English or French. These learners do not recognize overlap between subjects; they do not see, for example, that language and writing skills learned in English courses are useful background for success in typing courses. They see direct, rather than indirect relation between their perceived needs and the demands made of them by the school system. Where they cannot see a direct personal benefit arising from the study of a particular subject, they regard the time spent on that subject as wasted. They talk in terms of such subjects as "useless," "pitless" (ie. having no core, or 'meaning' for them), and boring. Their parents, with something of a broader world view than their children, are more likely to see a general usefulness in the "job ticket" offered by high school completion, but they are not in general supportive of theoretical or foundation courses. Their preference is to have for their children programs which concentrate strictly on job preparation skills: the shop and practical courses, for example.

These are the learners who skip class, repeat grades and talk in terms of maybe finishing high school with only failing grade. Their social life is not only more important to them than their academic life; their role models are older adolescents and young adults who are employed or unemployed high school dropouts. They admit that their social groups engage in drinking and drugs; petty theft supports their cigarette smoking habits; gangs, fights and playing cat-and-mouse with the authorities occupy much of their time. In a world where the here-and-now is of prime importance, it isn't surprising that little value is placed on systems like education, which has a long-term pay-off for the individual.

Ardis is the spokesperson for this group. Sixteen years old and in Grade 9 at a large urban school which has a sizeable multi-ethnic population and many ESL students, Ardis is "putting in time," with the general objective of maybe completing grade 12. Completion seems like a good idea; it has something to do with getting better jobs, Ardis thinks. But nothing is too clear for Ardis. There are litanies which Ardis can recite for you, in which high school graduation is linked to better job opportunities, but it does not seem that Ardis' heart is behind the words. Ardis is paying lip service, probably because in the short experience of Ardis' life, school has not been observed to be a useful tool in achieving any of these "better lives."

Ardis' father, who left school in Grade 9, has just been laid off once again from his part-time job as a maintenance man in a local warehouse. Ardis' mother, who "kinda drinks," says Ardis, is unemployed. She left school in Grade 10. It is typical of the learners' parents in this group that the mothers stayed a little longer in school than did the fathers. Ardis' family is typical of the families of other learners in this group: the members go about their own lives and cross paths, frequently in conflict with one another, on a haphazard basis. It might be said that theirs is a loose association of persons living under one roof, rather than a family in the customary bonded sense of the word. Ardis cooks something when hungry, washes some clothes if there are none, and everyone else does the same. There are no "chores" as such, since Ardis' family does not operate on the basis of structure and cooperation. At the moment Ardis is considering how to handle the most recent threat to the lifestyle which is most attractive: the school has threatened to permanently suspend Ardis for skipping classes. In the past three months, Ardis has missed an average of one class a day, and has spent the time with older dropout buddies at a local hangout. Ardis' mood is not bright, because once again, the school has Ardis pinned between a rock and a hard place: social life, which is "real" is being interrupted by the demands of the "artificial" world of school, and Ardis is powerless to fight back with dignity.

ARDIS

Can I smoke here? (Interviewer indicates "No Smoking" sign) Okay, will we be through this by lunch—there's somewhere I gotta go, eh? Yeah, so you wanna know about my family? Gonna figure out how I tick, huh? Well, there's six of us. Mom, Dad, four kids. I got two older brothers and one sister. Older. Yeah, I'm the youngest. So the brothers...well the oldest is 21. He's doin' some kind of upgrading somewhere, I dunno what it is. The next one is 18. He dropped out coupla years ago, works on the docks sometimes. My sister is 19. She lives out. Her and her boyfriend got this place, this apartment on the east side in the basement of some house. Actually I spend a lotta time there, sleep on the couch. It's easier to go my own way there, keep out of the thumb at home. Her and her boyfriend don't care what time I get home, eh? (laughs) Don't give me any hassle.

Yeah, well, school (expletive). Like, I'm doin' okay, you know. I'm failing three subjects but I'm passing all the others. So I have a bit of a problem with attendance. I dunno why it's gotta be such a big deal. Like at first it was a charge, huh...you could get away with it, so you did it just to prove that you could, like to yourself. And then you keep on, because you can spend the time hangin' out and drivin' around and just keepin' in touch with everyone. Like my friends aren't in school. They're guys, you know, that hang out. Dropouts mostly, some work, here and there....but they always know what's going' on. Parties. Stuff like that.

So then after a few months the school wakes up and some (expletive) starts screamin' "Ardis is skipping class", like it's the end of the world, and like they haven't only just noticed that I'm not there and I haven't been there for three months or somethin'. So they go and call my folks and there's gotta be this big conference and everyone gets all upset and it's Big Threats that I'll be thrown out of school. So I gotta make all these promises and my folks are all up at me, checkin' what time I do this and where I do that and do I have homework tonight and all that stuff. They don't know what I have to take anyhow, so they wouldn't know homework from a hole in the ground. But they do this big number about how they have to see what I've done every day. (Expletive). And my Dad says he'll get out the belt, but he won't because I'm bigger than he is now. When he laid into Wendy, my sister when she got pregnant, she moved out and quit school. So he holds back a bit on me. But it makes me get mean, you know. I get mad when they all come down on me like that. What do I do? Aww, start hittin' people, just (expletive) off.

So what's the point. I miss so many classes that now I can't catch up and I just look dumb when I'm there because I'm so far behind. Like it's the beginning of the year for me and everyone else is like half-way through. So anyhow I don't do too g—well. And I get into these disagreeance with the teachers about things. Like in the English class, which is totally...uhhhh, eh? I just goof around, 'cause the teachers figures you read a poem it'll change your life. So we're supposed to dig around, find what the guy was tryin' to say. So why doesn't he just say whatever the (expletive) he wants to say so we don't have to pick around in some (expletive) class wastin' out time figurin' him out or we fail. WE fail! I still get boggled by that stuff. Math is gross. Science, who needs it, eh? Like the electronics part is okay. But all that Chem and Biology (expletive) you can keep it.

And PE. I'm repeating PE for the third time. The teacher doesn't like me. I was mean to her in Grade 7, so she's getting back at me. I hate running. You've got to run to Blair street, you know how far that is? Like we gotta do that once every two weeks. That's about it. What we do is we jog slowly until the teacher passes us and then we walk. And then when she's on her way back, as soon as you can see her you start jogging slowly. And then she runs by you and you just walk. (Shrugs) My Dad figures it's a waste of time, PE. Says we should have woodwork, metal, stuff like that. Says that 2,3 times a week on PE isn't going' to end up helping anybody. You run two, three miles...you don't need education to learn how to run. Big deal. So for this I'm in trouble for skipping class. Doesn't make a lot of sense to me. (Snorts) How to run!

So what about the teachers? Well, it was okay, I guess, up to maybe Grade 7. When I hit Grade 8, it started to get harder. Like I did okay, got good grades before. But in Grade 8 the pace was faster and you don't seem to have the time to...there's so many people in the school and so teachers don't have the time to find out, like what you're, well, what you don't know. I mean, I'm not goin' to make a jerk of myself and ask questions in class when everyone else knows the answer or understands the work and I don't. And even if you wanna hang around after, which I don't like to do, there's just too many people, like the teacher gets to you and starts talkin' and explaining but you don't understand, but he just keeps goin' on and then he says, "Okay?", and you mutter "yeah" and that's it. And you're not in the same class every day. You got different teachers and I still get boggled by that. Like they don't know who you are

or what you can do and what you can't do. So they don't understand other personal problems you might have that you can't do your school work. They just don't wanna hear it 'cause there's so many kids. And, like I don't blame them for it. Like I don't think they should get involved with every student individually and personally, but they have such an attitude towards kids that we're all bad and we're out to get them and we all hate teachers, and stuff. Like maybe that's true for a lot, for some of the kids here, but it's not true for most of them. I don't know. They have a stereotype of kids. And, ummm...sometimes kids like to use a personal problem as an excuse, but most of the time what they say is true. They're having trouble with their mom and dad, or they're involved in something...it's really bad, they're involved with the police. They're having lots of trouble. They have to understand that, the teachers. They have to give them a chance and not just write them off. Cause then, it's..they just don't have any hope, right? 'Cause their parents say they're bad. The teachers say you're never goin' to get nowhere. And the kids begin to believe it and then they don't try any more. So like if the teachers just would, you know...just try a little harder to understand, it'd be better. Like when the teachers come to school, their problems don't stop, like if they had a fight with their husband or somethin' they're crabby all day...so I don't know why they expect a kid to do better than them.

Well, I've got Shop, English, Socials, PE, Science. Dropped French. Oh...and Math: my worst. Shop is the best. We spend some time in different things, like woodworking for a while, then metal, try it all. I wish we had this course my cousin's got. He lives up north...geez it's a long way. Farthest south he's ever been is to Chilliwack once, big thrill went to Flintstone City or some dumb thing, got all excited. Anyhow. they got this CORE course? Where you get your hunter training? And they do it in school, go for practice, use rifles, all that stuff. But it's a real official government program. Like at the end the government exam is sent to the school and the kids take it and get their certificates, like it's just what anyone has to do to qualify for a hunting licence, but you can take it as a course in school, like for credit. Now I think that's okay. Like that's something anyone needs to know to survive.

You don't survive naming novels or parts of the body or knowing some dumb formula for Chemistry. Actually, the whole thing would work a lot better I think if they kept all that stuff for the keeners...like make Grade ll, 12, maybe 10 just for the Preps and Geeks, eh...uhhh like the guys that wanna go on and get into university. Then the teachers could pay more attention to the average kids and we wouldn't have so much trouble. 'N while they're at it, they could make a lotta things better...bigger school, for one thing. More kids, more stuff to do. Co-ed PE'd make PE almost worth taking. But no running. Just give us stuff we can use and we'd be glad to be there, like it'd be worth our time.

I mean, you ask some teacher to tell you why you gotta do something and you get some dumb answer. Like Science. The part...ummm...it's mainly about your protons and your neutrons and stuff like that which I'd never be too excited about. So I don't do too good. But the work is, ummm....hard. And the teacher doesn't explain it too good...t-too well. Umm..he,uhhh...just says it once and then he, um, asks us if we need any help but no one really wants to go up to him because he doesn't really explain it too well. You get more confused each time you talk to him. Or in socials...the teacher, uhhh, gets kinda off the subject all the time. You ask him a simple question and it turns into his mother's sweater. So, he's not that good of a teacher. So you kinda gotta teach yourself, okay. Like, I just read some of it and then if it's on the test I'll remember some parts that might be in the answers or something. The multiple choice and that. And that's mostly what they give. So I can usually just read it once and forget it and then when I see it again on the day I can do really good. Not so good when he gives cross-words. The problem with cross-words is that I can't spell. One thing I like about that teacher though is that he doesn't give homework on the weekends. Says kids've got better things to do on their weekends than homework. I don't do that much homework, anyhow. Maybe an hour sometimes. I don't hand a lot of stuff in. Don't know how to do it, so what's the point? Just get into more trouble.

So I just take it, like step by step. I goof around when I can, yeah, but so does everyone. I guess I'll try to finish Grade 12, you could call that my goal, if that's what you mean by what do I see in my future. Everyone's always sayin' you can't get anywhere without it. So I guess they're right. Though lotsa my friends, they guys that hang out around the arcade with us, they dropped out couple, three years ago...some of them even 24, 25 years old now, they get along okay. Work, sort of, some times and then don't. So I dunno. But I guess I'll try to finish. I'm gonna play it clean for awhile, not skip, you know...because my mom says that if I start skippin' again she's gonna let me quit and get a job. She's says there's no point in warmin' a seat if you're not gettin' nothin' out of it, so if I'm not gonna pass my courses, I gotta quit.

But if I finish...ummm..and I think I can if I work at it....I think I can finish with maybe only one Fail on my card. Then...sometimes I think about what to do. Just get some work somewhere. Once I thought it'd be neat to be a jour-

nalist...but they say you gotta take all these courses in stuff I'm no good at, like Political Science and English. It's not the type of stuff I'm into, really. Like I just sit and stare. But it'd be, like an exciting job, eh...travel all across the world...you're in the middle of, like Israel and this bomb drops all around you and you're the reporter, like and it's really exciting. You're right there where everything is happening. And like the anchorwoman is asking you questions and you say these things and people listen to them. Have some kind of influence. I don't know.

So I'm not sure. Just take it step by step. Like my parents, they quit school at an early age. My dad didn't get too good of a job, but, well, it was a job. And he didn't have any further knowledge, like or any other thing, eh, so when he got fired or laid off, he couldn't just go on. He had to take whatever, like there was and I think it would be good to be able to stick to one thing, not just going on and off jobs. My mom says that she doesn't put any faith in the school counsellors to help us choose, ummm...what we want to do. They are, like attached to the school and what they say doesn't really connect to what's happening outside...like, she says, they give us unrealistic goals. Like, "you wanna be an astronaut? Go for it". Well that's no use if you can't do Math, is it? So I guess I'll look for something that's like steady...nothing fancy, like nothing ummm...professional or anything, but maybe just regular. Something to...ummm...count on. I guess.

But I guess I have to say that my ummm...social life makes it hard to pay attention to school. Difference between night and day. Like in class, there we are in rows, looking like that's the reason we are there. And then as soon as recess comes, or break between classes, we rush outside for a smoke and find out who's goin' where and who with. And then at lunch...we don't eat lunch...I just rush over to the Star Zone...that'sthe arcade and talk with the guys, maybe have a coke, find out where the parties are. We party a lot. It's a good group, like someone always has some money so we get some beer, cheap wine. Go behind the bushes, get drunk, roar around.

Weekends are for two-day parties, find some abandoned empty place, spread the word, and everyone comes. Friday night until Sunday. Yeah, drugs, liquor. Heavy music. I usually come home 3, 5 o'clock in the morning. Oh yeah, school nights too, but my parents go crazy when I do that so I just stay out of their way, go to my sister's place. Her and her boyfriend's got this car, anyhow, so we go all together to wherever the gang is.

Most of the time the parties don't end till they get broken up...police or something like that. But I've never been caught. Most of us don't. Like there's this girl who's got like light fingers, eh? Some kind of regular klepto. She just goes into the store and snags a carton and gives everyone a pack. Which is good, because I don't get like an allowance that will buy smokes or anything I need. Work sometimes at McDonald's but that's a dumb place and I'm on probation because I swear all the time when I get mean, eh. But I paid some down on some stonewash jeans that I can get next week. I got a jacket that way. $150. Good stuff. Anyhow, I don't hang around much with anyone from school. There's a few that've got like girlfriends or guys in the crowd I hang out with, and so we go from school together, but we're not close friends, eh...just part of the same group. So we share rides, spread the word about parties, help each other out. But my best friends are at the Star Zone. They're nice. Aww...they're into liquor and they're druggies a lot of them, but they're nice.

So what else d'you wanna know? I get up, bad news, about 7. No breakfast. Gives me a stomach ache to even think of breakfast. Have a smoke, Get a ride to school. Hang out. Smoke, talk, go to class. Recess, lunch go to the Star Zone, see what's up. Maybe eat something. School if I don't skip, then home or else usually I go back to the arcade or one of the guys picks me up right from school. Sometimes home for supper which sometimes someone cooks or I do. Spaghetti, macaroni, easy stuff. If everyone is home we might eat together, but I take my stuff to the tv, on the couch which is my bed anyhow, so it's sort of my bedroom. Make some phone calls, watch maybe four hours of tv while I do homework, if I do it. Sometimes I just fake it to keep things quiet at home. Then I go out. Lots of conflict there...my folks yell and shout, tell me if I go out don't come back so I go "okay" and put on my shoes and go to my sister's place. It's just another couch anyhow. Usually don't get to bed before 12:30, 1:30. Do it all again tomorrow. So that's it. That's Ardis. You finished, ummm...with me? Can I go now?

Conclusion

Ardis and the others in this group lead lives which are rough, relative to other learner groups in this study. They are active in the drug scene and are associated with gangs and problem youngsters socially. Their home environments do not offer models of bright futures, either. These youngsters have witnessed or experienced violence and in some cases abuse in both their homes and their social lives. They are street smart and future-poor. It shows in their language: they speak roughly and frequently crudely, and their perceptions are blunted by their experience and the limited role models they have around them. Shy as individuals, they are not going to push themselves to the front of the line at school in order to take control of their lives as learners. They prefer to sit silently in the back row, uncomprehending, and resentful of feeling inferior. Perhaps the most telling aspect of these youngsters' lives is that they consider themselves and their environment—and their limited futures—to be normal. These are not people who chafe in their chains; they object only to the interference school imposes on their lives.

VISIBLE MINORITY — HIGH ADVANTAGE

Summary

The learners in this group are the children of parents who emigrated to Canada many years ago. These children are Canadian by birth, and their parents have, over the twenty-five or more years they have lived in this country, made for themselves and their children lives significantly better than those they left behind in China, Japan, South America, Korea or the Caribbean. Their lives are "better," they believe, because their children have the opportunity to have a complete education and then to move into reliable jobs which will allow them an affluent lifestyle in which they can, in their turn, take over the support and care of their aging parents. To achieve these ends, the parents have spent their adult lives in Canada working 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week in small businesses: bakeries, restaurants, grocery stores, mainly. They have, over time, advanced up from employee to owner status and now, with their youngest child in secondary school, can look ahead to retirement within perhaps ten years.

Although the family retains its old world respect for courtesy, hard work and family responsibility, the parents of these learners have integrated themselves into the general Canadian community. They are in contact with other immigrants from their homelands, and extended families are usually not far away geographically. But these families are more likely to be found in mixed neighbourhoods or on small rural farms than embedded in an ethnic sector of the community.

Walter is the youngest child in his family. His parents, who came from Korea, have been in Canada for most of their adult lives. In Korea, Walter's father was an architect, with a university degree. Walter's mother trained as an accountant. Not surprisingly, they value education very highly. Walter has a sister, who is twenty, and a brother who is finishing high school this year. Walter is 14, and he is in Grade 8. Like the other learners in this group, Walter is deeply involved in sports. He is also quite gifted academically, and is capable of achieving straight first-class grades. In fact, his report card shows the odd "A", a scattering of "B's", and in French a "C-".

His performance is typical of this group. He knows that if he paid more attention, and worked harder, that he could have top grades. Several factors conspire to keep him from doing so. One of these is "image." Walter is concerned that his status as "jock" will be threatened if his grades are too high; he enjoys precious prestige as a member of the basketball team (they went to provincial levels of competition last year), and he is known to be a crackerjack volleyball, soccer and hockey player. If he also reveals himself to be an ace student academically, Walter fears that the other students will think him too much of a "goody-goody," and he will lose face. Furthermore, Walter's schedule for sports activities is so rigorous (with practices and tournaments, he is rarely home before 8:30 most nights), that he has neither the time nor the energy for prolonging his studies. So he coasts along, admitting that he will need better grades to finish high school with a good record...especially if he wants to go on to post-secondary education of some sort.

Interestingly, Walter and the others in this group regard grades of "C" and "B" as equivalent to failure. When asked how they are doing, they say things like "keeping my head above water, I guess." If the question is pursued, they will

say that their grades are "poor"; "average" grades, in their eyes, are "A's". So there is a significant gap between goal and performance, and a curiously placid resignation in the attitudes of these learners. They are fiercely pressured for time, and throughout their lives they have seen all their parents, their role-models, working all hours of the day and night just to "put two meals on the table," as one youngster said. Yet they do not choose to manage the time to their personal advantage, and they are characterized by a genuine lack of self-esteem. "Well, I'm slow," shrugs one, recalling her years in primary school learning assistance classes to correct problems in math and to help the slow reader move more quickly. Several of these youngsters experienced learning difficulties in their early school years, in some cases simply because English was their second language, even though the family had lived many years in Canada. And the sense of failure and embarrassment at not performing well seems to have lingered into the high school lives of these learners, affecting their ability to take charge of their work and their goals.

WALTER

Hi. Sure. I can tell you about my family first, I guess. My folks own a grocery store. We live outside town. We have a big house...we needed one because my grandparents and my mother's mother used to live with us. My grandparents have their own house now and my mother's mother died two years ago. So there's lots of room. Especially because my sister isn't here any more. Well I mean she comes home and all, but she's away at college, taking med-lab technician training. She comes home, I guess it's about once a month. She's gonna find her own place once she gets out, though. She won't live here. My brother is still at home. He'll finish high school this year and he's like me...he's not sure what he's gonna do. But he's thinking of, like book-keeping or something like that...for sure he doesn't want to go into the bush or anything. That's not his bag at all. Actually, he's a a wimp. But he's my brother, so what can y'say? And then there's me (laughs). So what's to say. You know I'm in Grade 8, so I can't tell you that. I like school okay, I guess. I mean, if it weren't for school there'd be nothing to do (laughs). It's pretty fun. Yeah...school's okay.

But I live for basketball, you know. I play for the school team and we do really good in our games. We'll be in the provincials this year again if we can keep it up. It's hard, too, 'cause a lot of the guys don't turn up to practice and then the coach makes us all practice the same thing over again until everyone knows it so, like if you go to every practice, you gotta do the same thing like twenty times or something until all the guys have learned it. But I still go. Couldn't miss it, you know. I play soccer and volleyball too...that's at the community centre. And I'm pretty okay at hockey too. Real jock, eh?

So, tell you about a typical day? Yesterday: oh, yesterday was terrible....(laughs) but it was a regular day, I guess. Okay, here goes. Got up at 7...the alarm went at 6:30 but I ignored it. So what else is new? Had to hurry then. Showered, did my hair, no time for breakfast, grabbed my stuff...get my gear all ready the night before, for the games, you know?, like jerseys and towels, clean the cleats on the soccer boots, stuff like that...head out the door just in time for my ride. This guy, a friend of my brother's actually, lives out near us and he gives us a ride, well he gives me a ride if I'm ready. Like he's in Grade 12, so he doesn't wait for no Grade 8'er, no way! If I miss him I have to try to get the bus, well it's two buses to get all the way to school, and then I'm always late.

Well. That's getting to school. Practice for a while, sometimes there's morning practice for basketball, three times a week. The other days I just hang out and practice on my own whatever I feel like just then. Then it's the bell, classes and at lunch I either hang out in the Caf with the guys, buy something to eat, or someone drives a bunch of us to McDonald's. My parents' store is close to the school, like about four blocks, so sometimes I go there, talk with my folks, eat something with them in the little room out back. I like that...they still always have something Korean, rice, vegetables, that kind of thing, for lunch and I just really like it.

So after school there's a game or practice. Oh, and band. Did I mention band before? Okay, well I joined the band this year, and I'm playing the clarinet. I played piano since I wa like seven years old at home, so I wanted to learn something else. I really like the clarinet, and the band is doing really great this year. We've won a few things and we're just, doin' all right! So, depending on what I've got, I practice or play something until usually 5:30 or 6:00 most nights, and then I go over to the store and help out for a while. Clean the shelves, set stuff out, cashier, whatever, until my Mom is ready to go home. Then we take the bus home—or sometimes my brother comes and he drives us and then goes back to pick up my dad later at 10:00 when he closes up for the night. And we have supper, or whoever's home

does. Like my Mom doesn't go to the store till about 11 in the morning, and she can do all the house stuff and get something started for dinner. So when we come home, there's not much to do. So we eat at about 8, 8:30, and then there's some phone calls to make, check in with friends you know. Put on the stereo and do some homework (laughs), kinda between calls! That takes an hour or two. Maybe watch a little tv, coupla hours at most, and bed at 11...earlier if I have a game in the morning, like on Saturdays I usually have a soccer game first thing, and I like to get lots of sleep so I can really be up for that.

My friends are all crazy guys. Like this one guy, he sort of, like accidentally set the school on fire? Well, he was throwing matches around, and he'd kick, like that...and, umm, he thought it was out and he threw it in the garbage can and it wasn't...out, you know. So it nearly started the school on fire. And there's this other guy who talks to girls a lot? He'll do it to any girl he can find, like he'll just start talking to her? He just goes around talking like that. And then after, you see them, like walking together. Crazy stuff. Not as crazy as my sister was, though. I remember her and her friends had this Note War when she was in, oh, Grade Ten maybe. Anyways, they started seeing like who could write the longest notes. So she'd write like ten pages one night, and her friend would write back fifteen pages the next day. And then she'd have to write twenty pages that night, and on they went. Like every day there'd be another note, only longer. They called it a draw at one hundred and fifty pages, 'cause, like after 150 pages, what's there left to say? Anyhow, they were crazy. I mean they left notes for each other all day long all over the school. How are you? Okay. That sort of stuff...Well, I don't know, I mean she never actually showed me the stuff, but geez, what can you have to say when you've only been apart for like one class?

But friends, eh. I mean my friend, like a best friend, that is, would have to be, ummm...well, like really understanding. And really nice. Crazy, okay, but nice, you know? You'd have to be able to trust them. And when you, like, I'd be able to speak to them openly. Like tell them everything that's happening and for them to be, just really, like to understand what you're saying and everything. So most of the guys who are, like my group, are guys from the teams, and guys I've known like all my life practically. So we do different things together. Like some guys are fun to go to a movie with. Some you talk to. Some you go to their houses, have them over for overnight, that stuff. So I don't have any one person who's like real close, like that. Just a buncha guys.

Well, like I said, I don't know what I want to do...like after high school. It's still pretty far off. I mean I just think about getting through the next three years. Everyone says it's so hard, and guys make it really tough for you. It's pretty scary if you're not, like one of the top people in the class. My grades aren't that hot this year. Well, it's partly my fault, like I know I don't work as hard as I could, and so I'm just sort of scraping along, good enough to keep on the team and not get thrown out of anything. But I'd need to do a good "average" to get into maybe college or even university. I don't mean all "A's" or anything. Maybe half "A's" and half "B's" would be pretty good. But I'm not near that now...way below average. My Math isn't too bad, it hangs in at "A", "B-" on a bad day. But French? "C-" all the way. It's tough. I study it and all, but I just can't keep it in my head. And I guess because it's like a third language for me it's kinda hard, and it isn't anything like Korean or English, so I'm really stuck there. But they say you gotta have some French for university, so I stick to it.

I think maybe I want to go for pro, like in basketball or maybe soccer. Then, you know, kinda see how far I could go in that. Then maybe follow my dad, like do what he did. Or my uncle. He teaches. I'd look for something that makes more money. A lot of money. So I'd have a PhD. That doesn't seem too hard. I'd just stay in school for five years and whatever. But I wanta do something that's exciting, and I could work hard at it and it would pay off later, so I won't have to work so hard then. And I'll make lots of money doing it. Then I can play sports, go to parties, just socialize. Like my social life might not be that great at first, but once you get grown up and have an easy job, you have all this spare time and that's when you have your social life...like friends. Good friends. Going out playing sports, skiing, volleyball, stuff like that.

My favourite subjects, if I have to choose, are, I guess, Math, Gym, except for the folk-dancing we have to do sometimes. I hate that. And...Art. Yeah. Art's okay. You can keep Social Studies, as far as I'm concerned. I guess the Geography part is not too bad, but I hate the history part...questions like "who was the Prime Minister during this time?" and stuff like that. I mean, I personally don't see what good all this is going to do to us. But the projects aren't too bad, you know. I like those, because I can spend some time and work on my own. Come up with my own ideas, it's not just click, question, click, answer, eh? English isn't my favourite either, if you wanta know. I don't mind the reading. Some of the books are okay, and I read most of them. But the poetry leaves me cold. And it's kinda hard when

the teacher's using words that are six feet long and you don't understand what the first two feet of the word mean, you know. It's just, kinda impossible.

But I think there are some things they oughta like stress more in school, you know. Like everything is on how to pass this Math course or that English course. They should help you more learn the things you need to learn for life. They don't teach you anything you can't learn by yourself. Like my brother, he took Consumer Ed last year and he said it was a waste—like common sense would show you all the stuff they were trying to teach you. Don't waste your money. Keep track of things. Don't fall for the "Bargain" sign. Stuff like that. The things you have to learn in life are sometimes more important than the things they are teaching here.

Like some people don't succeed too well because they are shy or something like that and they need some sort of guidance to try to learn what they are doing and how to change it. It's just...Drama is a really good thing, because it teaches you to trust people. Like everything else is just...they teach you just...well, they ask you questions and you solve some problems. But that won't help you in life. And if you can't do the things you need to do in life, you're stuck. You need to learn what your problems are and how you can solve them yourself. Like in math, you don't have to do anything in the class. He just marks it and...it doesn't help anything except your IQ, well, your grade, eh? But it doesn't have any relevance with anything else. You can live without Math, but you can't live without learning how to be unshy to people that you work for. They think that you can't do anything, so they'll fire you. But if you can think for yourself, you can make up ideas. At this school they kind of don't do that. They just kind of teach you procedures. It doesn't help you. And it's boring. So I'd look for more useful stuff, and, umm...well, we're a rural school, so we always get the short end of the stick on money. We need some new balls for basketball, and some bigger desks. And actually, I'd like it if the enrichment class didn't have to take us out of our regular class, like if it could be run some other time...as it is, we get to be behind in everything all the time, because when you're in enrichment class you miss your regular class, but the guy, the teacher, he expects you to do all the work anyhow. So you run around all day asking your friends in the class what you missed and how to do it. Or on the phone. Do it that way. But it wastes a lot of time.

Still, I've got it easier than Tom, a fellow in my class. His dad, they're Chinese, eh, and his dad never got to go to school for very long, so he thinks this is all really important, he makes Tom read all the textbook...like maybe we have to do Chapters Four and Seven to complete a unit? Well Tom's dad says he's gotta read the whole darn book, so he can be ahead for next year, and you'll never know when you'll need that stuff. So poor Tom must work 2 hours a night on that stuff you don't even have to do, and his dad makes him take notes, too! Anyhow, I gotta say that on the whole our school's pretty good. Not like some I've heard about from guys on other teams we play. Here, the teachers, well, some aren't what you'd call my favourites, but they're all pretty good as long as you don't get in their way and never cause any trouble...like not listening and stuff.

Conclusion

On the whole, Walter faces a better life than his parents have had. He is still adrift socially and academically, but he has the ability to succeed if he wants to, and he has a home environment which encourages him to do so. Walter's parents have dedicated their lives to helping their children reach this level of opportunity, and their years of labour have not dulled their immense good humour and their affection for their children. Old-fashioned enough not to want her sons doing domestic chores ("I do the things in the house. I don't mind because they are very good boys, you know"), Walter's mother is quick to observe that while Walter's sports schedule does interfere with his studies at present, it has the distinct merit of "keeping him off the street." Walter's father expects Walter to help in the grocery store, and provides Walter with whatever spending money is required. He does not, however, feel that his son should sacrifice either his studies or his recreational activities for his parents' sake. It pleases them that they have provided well enough for their children that they can afford to say to their son,"no, you go and enjoy yourself."

Not surprisingly, the family does not do much together. With the parents at the store seven days a week, family outings are almost non-existent. Nevertheless, once a year Walter's uncle comes for two or three weeks in the summer, and Walter's family takes a trip together: perhaps to California; once, to Korea. Walter does not go unsupervised, however. His parents arrange their hours at the store so that one of them is always home when Walter is there. Walter's friends frequently come to visit, and they like to stay overnight. And although Walter's study habits...a mixture of

homework and phone calls adjacent to either the tv or the stereo...are perhaps not impeccable, Walter's parents draw the line at issuing dicta or ultimata to their children. A raised eyebrow, a polite reminder. Walter is now and will always have to be, they know, master of his own future.

VISIBLE MINORITY — LOW ADVANTAGE

Summary

The students in this group operate from positions of some physical or social disadvantage. One has cerebral palsy; one has permanent injury to a leg as the result of a car accident; others have mixed racial backgrounds. In some instances, the child has both physical and racial differences which single him or her out from the main school population.

Simon is the profile child for this group. He is the child of a white Canadian mother and a Pakistani father who, when Simon was 6 months old, left the family and moved to a small town in the interior of British Columbia. Simon and his mother are not in contact with the natural father, and Simon knows little about him. Simon suffers from a disability which involves the function of his hip joints. He does daily exercises to strengthen his muscles, but he will always move with a distinctive awkwardness.

Simon's mother met her current husband 6 years ago. They married a year later, and Simon's life has become fairly stable insofar as his family constellation is concerned. He had some early experience of foster homes when his natural father first left the family. At the time Simon's mother was emotionally unable to cope and Simon was temporarily relocated in a series of foster homes for a period which lasted 3 years. During that time Simon developed a fear of impermanence, and only recently has he ceased worrying that his present stable family situation will suddenly disintegrate. Like the others in his group, Simon is an average performer academically. Tests show that his abilities exceed his achievement, and that in some work he lags far behind his potential. In part this is due to periods of illness or family trouble which have disrupted his schoolwork and set him behind his peers, as in his math and reading, for example. He has special assistance for math, and is progressing well, but has some distance to go to meet his potential.

These children are not aspiring to high academic goals, however. They intend to complete high school, and they hope to get "good" (ie. steady) jobs. They speak of becoming truck drivers or taxi-drivers, janitors, electronics technicians or firemen. Their ability to intellectualize their lives is limited, and while they are lively and talkative, they are not lucid about themselves or the world around them. In several cases, their earlier childhoods were experiences of physical and emotional violence, and the present state of relative calm they express masks the massive adjustments these young people have already made in their lives.

They are not "belongers" or "joiners." Typically they have a loose association of friends, but no best friend. They don't participate in sports, and these children will not be found working as monitors in the school halls, or tending the crosswalks. They don't join clubs, in or out of school. They do not read for pleasure; they do watch far more television than their peers. Their families tend to be isolated in some respect from the community at large: some are geographically distant from their neighbours; others are separated by language barriers; and others keep hours of work which make social interaction difficult or impossible.

SIMON

Okay...so who is Simon. Well, there's not much to tell, I guess. Just that I'm twelve, in Grade 7, get along okay I guess, like with people and all and...well what else d'you wanna know?

So what's Simon's day like? Oh, like that sort of stuff...sure I guess I can do that. Yesterday. Well, lemme see...Tuesday, that was, okay, I got it. Got up, grabbed some...wait a minute, did I?, Oh yeah. Sorry...yeah, grabbed some crackers for breakfast, got the bus, went to school. Hung out for a bit. Did some work. Then we went out for recess.

Did some more work. Then we had lunch. Then outside, walked around. Came back in, did more work, caught the bus, came home, had a snack. Relaxed. Watched tv. That's about it.

Well, for the rest of it, there's dinner. Mom makes that and we all eat it. Sometimes my step-dad is home for dinner, but he has to work a lot at night. Sometimes he's away all week. It's not easy to find a job, and he has to go wherever the work is, so sometimes it's just Mom and me for, like a week at a time. I guess it's been easier, like for money, you know, since they got married. I mean, two incomes has to help, you know. But Mom doesn't work all the time, 'cause she can't find jobs a lot, so she's home quite a bit, and I guess it must worry her...not having a job, I mean. Anyhow. So there's dinner. I watch tv actually quite a lot, like 'til dinner's ready. And then sometimes I help with the dishes, and then if there's some homework I just do that for half, maybe an hour, and then watch some more tv until I go to bed. That's about 9:30 most nights. In the mornings, if Mom is working, she leaves before I do, and she leaves me a note if there's anything special, like any little job she wants me to do, and I just get myself ready and go to school. And that's it. That's me, I guess.

Oh, I guess I can tell you something more about the family. Well I'm the last one at home. My Mom had three kids, and the others don't live at home any more. I don't know what they do. Work somewhere. They're quite a bit older than me. We've moved around quite a bit, lived in a few places, you might say. Lately mostly places where my step-dad could get work. They've been together for—well, they got married in—well let's say about 5 years now. So we live in this place, this house that we're fixing up. My step-dad knows how to do a lot of this stuff, like plumbing and construction, you know, so we're gonna make it real nice one day. It's not like Jerry's place, he's this guy I know from school, eh...and his , well, he's not his step-dad, but like the guy who lives with Jerry's Mom, you know...well he built this geodesic house they live in way out of town, and it's like really primitive, and he and Jerry work on it all the time. So we're like just fixing up our place, not like reconstructing it, you know? But we can only do that when Hal, that's my step-dad's name, is home.

He and Mom talk a lot about moving, and I guess we'll be going again if he thinks we can find somewhere nearer to his work, so that he doesn't have to be away so much. Trouble for him is that his work keeps changing places, so it's hard to pick a spot for us, eh. Anyhow, until that happens, here I am, slogging through Grade 7, just happy for the days when we don't get gym class. Yuck...that's what that class gets from me. I'm not against physical activity you know, but I guess it's that I'm not so good at gym...I like some of the games allright in PE class, and I'm like really fit. Guys challenge me because they don't think I can do twenty pushups, but they're always sorry, because they do, like one and—pfffft—they're out...but me, like I just keep going on. But for me, you could just forget gym class and I'd be happy.

Funny thing is, I like Math. I mean, it's not funny that I like it, but I like it even though I'm not that good at it. I take this special class for people who have trouble in Math, and my marks are no great shakes, eh, but I don't mind that...I still like it. Socials isn't too bad, because I guess it's interesting and I've lived a lot of places, and my older brother went on some world youth program in India, so I know a little about that...so I don't mind Socials much at all. English is so-so. French is a real problem, though. Just can't get the hang of that one at all. Oh, and there's Computer...we get some time once a week for that, and then there's some time like at lunch or after school that some kids use, for playing games that teach you about computers, and those are great.

My grades are average, I guess. Like I do better in some things than in others. I never do well in French, like give that maybe a "P" or a C-minus; but I manage to get through everything else, so I guess that's okay. It's getting harder to keep up, though. I guess that happens towards high school. Like there are more and more people, and everyone wants to make it through and get a job, and there aren't that many jobs, so it's tough. I mean like I'm not real competitive or anything like that, but I want to finish my high school and I want to have a good job, so I try to get through everything, but some days it's just like I'm in a box, a corner, maybe locked in, even, you know—like so many things to do and all of it has to be done now. I try to get all my homework done and maybe stay ahead a little, but when everyone gives you the same due date, or you have like three tests on the same day, well you just have to let the thing you're good in slide and concentrate on the ones you don't know so that you can get through. And then you don't do so good in your best subject because you were cramming for the ones you didn't know. It's not that great, you know.

I guess our classes are pretty big, too, so the teacher doesn't always have time for answering questions. Or, like someone who can't do the work at all asks for help, and then the others can't get a chance to get help and then the period is

over and ...that's it. You can talk to the teachers sometimes after school and stuff, like for help, but if you've got to get the bus, you can't stay, eh? So it's not their fault. There's too many kids and not enough time. So I just try to keep up. Ask questions. Listen. I mean, I think the school does a good job, basically. Like it shows you what life is about. You gotta learn discipline, do your work. And you learn about what you want to know for the work you want to do. So, like sometimes I think I'll want to work in computers. Well, there's the computer at school and the games, and I can sort of get the feel of what it's like to work with them all the time. Or later, when we get Shop, we can try out, like Woodworking and Metalwork, and see if that's what we want to do, and if it is, well then we already know something about it, So that's pretty good, I guess.

As for me, well I dunno what I'm gonna do yet. Get a job, like I said. You can't get anywhere without money, so a good job matters a lot. I've got this problem with my hips, though, so my Mom and my step-dad say that a lot of jobs aren't for me. They tell me that they're too dangerous...like being a firefighter, or a trucker, or something like that...but they think I won't be able to do it. Actually, I'm pretty strong, because I do my exercises all the time, and I think I'm pretty gutsy. I mean, I'll go and stay at the others guys' places overnight and things like that. I'm used to sleeping in different places, because I've been moved around so much. And I think I'm sort of, like different, in my mind, from some of the other kids. I think about things quite a bit, and I'm kind of my own person. Like, there's guys I hang out with and everything, you know, and we do stuff together, like I go to their houses, or we go to town for something. But they don't have to do the exercises and think about what they can do and what they maybe could do, like I do. They look like everyone else, too. Maybe their lives are easier. I dunno. Anyhow, we just sort of hang out...like guys, eh...we don't talk a lot about what we'll do, like after finishing school. You do that more in high school I think.

My weekends? Well, I watch tv, maybe help around a bit, chop wood or clean up the yard. See the guys at someone's house, maybe. Sometimes go to town with Mom and Hal. Actually I like best to get outside, on my own. Like sometimes at night I just get up and go out to see what goes on, listen to things for how they sound in the dark, you know. It's nice. Like when the frogs are out, you can just go out and if you make any noise, —rrruppp!— they stop. But if you're real still they keep going. That's nice.

And I like to get out, away a bit, you know, like sometimes I'll just walk over to one of the guys' houses instead of getting Mom to drive me, just to look at things on the way. So I guess I'm kind of strange that way. I know the other guys aren't like that, I mean they range all the way from your tough guy to your nerd, but there aren't any preps in that group, you know, the guys who are always out for everything. They're real skinny and they work out all the time. They've got, you know, these shirts with the little alligators on them.....like some of those shirts cost 75 bucks, eh? So, whoopy-ding! I hang out with guys like me, who aren't part of everything that goes on. Jerry that I mentioned's one of the guys. His life has been pretty mixed up, with his dad leaving and all. And another guy, he's half Chinese and he's got this funny walk because he's got cerebral palsy. He really likes to play the piano, but his teacher, this old guy, just died of cancer, so that messes you up a bit, you know. And this other guy has a sister they just adopted, a little kid maybe eight years old, she's part-Indian and she's been in like seven foster homes and everything. She doesn't ever like to go to sleep in case things change on her while she's not looking. So his life's really hairy. To me, my life is pretty normal now, compared to all that. I've got these funny hips that make me walk like a frog, but they're not as bad as they were because I exercise. And my real father came from Pakistan, so I've got this permanent suntan, but at least I'm not like that guy's little sister: I sleep good at night.

Conclusion

Simon and the other children are sensitive individuals. They have each found a way to cope with their differences. Some, like Simon, use direct bravado: he does more pushups than anyone else. Or there are others, like little Trina, who lose themselves in a private world of drawings. Small for her age, she nestles out of sight and out of the main traffic of life. What she doesn't care for simply does not exist for her; there are individuals in her life whose existence she effectively and totally ignores. Another child, Charlie, has become an overachiever, at least as far as his teachers are concerned. His method of coping is to equate personal success with passing his courses. This approach has curbed his intellectual and emotional development.

The families of these children are also important influences. In many instances, the family unit has broken down or been restructured. These children have known upheaval, loss and fear. They are familiar with disease, death and divorce. They do not live affluently. The children do not expect to ask their parents for spending money, and purchases are made only after very careful consultation with the family budget. The family is not particularly close-knit, in comparison with other groups. They do not take summer holidays, and they do not go on family weekend expeditions to cross-country ski or play baseball. More typically, the child will do something practical with one of the parents...chop wood or clean house. And it is also notable with this group that there are not strong patterns of favouring one parent over the other. In short, these families are more a situation of individuals living together, and the youngsters are demonstrably independent characters who often get themselves up and off to school on a regular basis in the absence of parents who have had to leave early for jobs.

NEW CANADIAN — HIGH ADVANTAGE

Summary

Sam is a member of the group of New Canadians who are Highly Advantaged. Since Sam's family has only very recently come to Canada from their home in Asia, Sam is still struggling to learn the language as well as trying to fit in academically and socially at school. Sam has met Nabi, whose family came here from Europe nine and a half years ago, and while they are not actually friends, Sam has learned already from Nabi that there are many difficulties of adjustment that continue to plague those who have years, rather than only months, behind them in this new country. Like Nabi, Sam is pragmatic about education: it is a valuable tool to use in the struggle for a better life. Sam and Nabi both know about deprivation and oppression. Nabi's parents came from backgrounds of poverty. Sam's parents were both teachers in their Asian homeland. They knew political oppression, and there was always a shortage of work for qualified persons. Few good students could find places in university. People without good jobs could not hope to lead prosperous lives, and a university education was required for the higher-paying university jobs.

In both families there is an attitude about jobs which almost amounts to a class system: professional jobs are best; "careers" like being a policeman are less dignified and therefore less valuable; least desirable are "jobs" which require no formal training. Nabi's parents believe that Nabi will be a more valuable marriage partner if there is a university diploma to display.

For Sam's family, as for Nabi's, the move to Canada promised a better chance of success for their children. Their backgrounds have made Sam and Nabi able to maintain high personal standards. Sam, who keeps a gruelling work schedule, and has a part-time job as well, is very stoical about the absence of leisure time in the family's schedule: work now, earn time to play later. And like the other young people in this group, Sam feels deeply responsible to the family for having made this move in order that Sam might have a better, freer life with greater opportunity for an affluent lifestyle. In short, the family gave, and Sam owes. The thought is never far from mind.

SAM

Yes, my name is Sam. I go to school here. We have now 5 months in Canada. I am glad we come here. But is difficult the change, you know.

I am taking the Grade 10 in my school, but in my country I was more far along. The English is big problem. It mean I have to go back in my class—do thing I already did before but in English so I am doing it slower. Yes, I try to tell you more about it.

I have 15 years. My brother is more older. He married and he live near my family. My father come here 5 year ago to get job, make money to bring us. There is my mother and my father and my brother and me here now. And brother wife too. But they are not live in same house with us.

My mother bring us to my father 5 month ago. My father he find house for us near job, near school for me. He work in factory—car parts, you know. He don't mind. He make money to fix house for us, bring us here. In old country he teach in high school. Teach science. My mother she teach there too. Now she at home for us. Her English not good enough for work here at anything. She try but her English not good you know. Father English not good too. He can not teach here. Maybe one day he think to do that, but now work all the time just try to make money for us, not have time for study. Where we coming from the people speak the English a little, good to know it for maybe move to Canada. But it not much. Not help me with the school. Not help my father or my mother here.

I go to big school, many student. Others like me don't have English, too. I know Nabi, who is here 9 year. Nabi know the way around, speak good the English, but Nabi still say that it hard. I think that maybe Nabi work pretty hard too. In my old school I work pretty hard. I do get the good mark...not top but more than just okay. Here very hard for me to do this. And I see Nabi still have trouble. And Nabi have so many year here. But I try. I work hard all the time. Ask question.

I think sometime easier for me. Nabi here long time people think Nabi know all the thing. When Nabi ask question people mad, think Nabi fool around or dumb. Think Nabi know all of English by now. Nabi say to me many things not know, but can't ask now because people laugh or get mad. Maybe easier for me. I don't know.

Now I go to ESL class. This where we have story and picture and thing to teach us to use the words. We write some too, try to get it right. I go Monday, Wednesday and Thursday for 1 hour. Then I go home and work too. When we come to Canada I bring book, it call English 900. Many people use back home. Have 900 English sentence inside. Tell you how to say right the words. When I have finish the homework I do this book some every day. I must learn the English very good so that I can get the good grade in my work.

Where I come from we work very hard in the school all the time, so I am use to do the work. We go to school there maybe same time for each day. but we have five maybe six hours the homework every time. And we must do the hard work sooner. We do the science and the math in Grade Seven and Eight. That I do now in here Grade Ten. So this maybe help me a little. Because my English not good but I know what is about in the math especially because the math is the numbers. That don't change. The science is more hard because without know the language it hard to know what the work about. But I have my book from before and I keep up with work so I not fall behind, you know. I read in my own language and I not forget. Then when I have the English, I not have lost time, because I am already knowing the work.

I think to spend the two year to learn the English. I not think I lose two year though. I tell you why I think this. It very important that I work hard, because my family come from far away to bring me here. Give up old life and all for to come here. We think maybe better life here: more education, doctor for my mother, my father make some money for us, get my brother job too. More freedom we think. So I got to work very hard because they not learn the English to get good work. They look after for me to do it. If I not work hard I don't make good mark and then don't get to the university and get the good job to look after my family. So now I study more all the time. I think it take me two year to learn English so to do good work for good mark. But in the two year I not get behind because I study very much all the time, in the old books I bring from home and in the work I have now. Ask question. Do many homeworks. I think is okay in two year time.

I think Nabi must have do this but maybe does not work so hard any more. Nabi get okay in marks, but more like to do some other thing now. More Canadian life. Me I just do the work, don't go to the basketball, like Nabi do. Nabi do karate and teach some. Have some money for to spend. I think Nabi feel more home here than me because have more year here.

Nabi think like me that school sometime not too hard here. Sometime the student not have to work much. Nabi think that this not very good. Nabi say that the school is for to learn, not to dance. I know Nabi not go to dance at school. I do not go, too. Nabi say school need to have more work and harder. Me, I can not work more hard right now, because all is so new I work hard all the time. But I think for Nabi is different. Nabi see how maybe easy school for students here. At home we have big test every day. You do your work and clean the school too. If you do not do the work the teacher tell your parent and you are ashamed. Not many can go to the university. A few per cent. The one who go to the private school have best chance. Public school not have good books or good teachers. The public school have

class some from the morning and the others in the afternoon. This not good because you go for short time each day, do not learn much and teacher too busy to help...just give lots work for to do home. My brother and I go to private school there and it good. Make work very hard. I guess good to learn to work hard there. It help now.

Me I do maybe 4 hour homework each day. Nabi don't do so much any more, maybe 2 or three. I have much time to read the work and then to write the answer. And the ESL too. I think all the time about the work. Sometime I just get up in night to find some word or to look up answer. And I make question for take to teacher next day, find out. My teacher help a lot. Sometime I ask my cousin, he go to same school, but be here longer time—maybe 3 year—but he not always know about the work. Mostly I ask teacher about the work. Ask my cousin about how to do something...like who to ask for things, or where to go for get something. That stuff he help me with.

I get up quarter seven in morning. Maybe have breakfast. Sometime take some lunch, an apple, but sometime just go buy something at the store. Buy something that the kids eat...pizza or coke. After school I go home on bus again, do homework. My mother she have make dinner for when my father come home, maybe 9-9:30, so we eat that. And talk about what we do that day. We don't speak much English because my father and my mother don't have the too good English...especially my mother. My father speak a little more because he have the work outside, you know. After that I maybe help the wash dishes. My mother say she home, she do the work. My work she say to study. So then I do more of the homework. After I finish I have shower and go to bed. 10, maybe 11:00.

I not watch much the tv. Maybe on weekend a little. Sometime just read book. I bring some adventure book when we come and I read this a little. What you call horror book too. a little I can read this in English, in you know, the book with the picture....the comic book. But not much. Sometime I go with some friend to movie or MacDonald, but have to do the work first. Three days after school I go to job, deliver advertisings on my bike. Go home from school, get bike and go to work. This is for three hours. I am pay $4.50 for the hour, so this is some good money for me to take home and I can go with the friends sometimes and not ask the father for money. It is not good to ask him for the money because he always is working so hard for us to have good life. So I have a little money to myself, go with friends, learn how to do the things. My father like that I do this. He think it very important to learn to fit in with the friends. Some of the friend from school have the dog. I just think sometime to have dog, buy with the money, but not now. Now is to work, not have pet.

I think that I do not have too many the friends. Some time I go with some friends from school, but they not good friends, you know for close. They like school friends, not see after finish school maybe go away. I have cousin who is good friend, maybe best friend. See him ten, twenty years from now, still close to me. I think this good friend, long time. But good to know lots other friends in school...get along okay is important. And school friends tell who to be okay, who stay away from, so I do not get into trouble with anybody. No fights, no bad stuff.

My father he talk with me just say I got to do good work for help whole family. Sometime he talk to me about science work because he know this from when he teach. This help me very much to not get behind even though English a big problem for me. I just work until it goes right. My father he tell me that I must take the work for the university. To have chance to get to get the good job. He say to take some course in school and I take it. Because he know more than me. I don't know we do much together. He don't have time. Me, I study. So I guess we do like family maybe go to church once, two times a week. Sometime see cousin family. Wedding. Birthday. Just go and see them, maybe have something to eat. I talk to my mother sometime too, but my father can help with the work, and my mother she can not.

My school help me to get ready for the university. I work hard, get the good grade, I get place in university. Maybe be doctor. I don't know. Just work now and see what come. I think maybe school good for learn, but not so good sometime for get along. I like if school show more how to do thing in life, like get job, or get driver licence, or my father have trouble with the tax...maybe the school show more to new kids how to do these thing. Then the kid show the father. Sometime at the school someone come to talk to class. Like police man. I think sometime to be police man, too. It good to help and to make people safe. But now I just do the work. Later I think about job life.

In school I think to like most the PE. The Math good too. They easy for me to do because the English not so hard. I know I got to need the science, but now I just like the PE because I can feel like I not so far behind. Maybe I talk to you six month more, I just think to like Chemistry or English class better. But now pretty hard.

Conclusion

Sam and the other members of this group have a long road to walk. They need to become fluent to a degree which will allow them to compete successfully in higher education and the professional job market which is their career goal. They have strong family ties which, while encouraging the children to find themselves a place as Canadians, impose values which at times make social adjustment difficult for the youngsters. But these children stand a good chance: their families are able to provide good homes, a comfortable lifestyle and three meals a day (even though Sam and the others don't always exhibit model eating habits!). The family structure is basically intact, and although life is complicated and difficult as an immigrant, these youngsters can enjoy the comfort and security of family life. Moreover, they all have at least some nearby relatives who have been here longer, and who represent various generations of the extended family so important to them in their homeland. In this respect, Sam and the others have tremendous security, and their potential for assimilation into their new Canadian culture is very high.

NEW CANADIANS — LOW ADVANTAGE

Summary

These new Canadians have been here, on the average, for four years. By now they are established in their new routines at home and at school, although this does not necessarily mean that they yet feel at home in Canada. These are children whose families have been able to send one or two members abroad, in the hope that these "pioneers" will do well enough in Canada to sponsor other family members' emigration to the new land. Gurwa is the profile student for this group. In the case of her family, Gurwa's mother's brother, who had previously moved to Canada, was able to sponsor his sister and, with the assistance of a local church group, bring her with three of her five children from India to Canada. Gurwa's uncle provided room in his home for his sister and her children, and supported them while they settled. Gurwa's mother has found a job in a garment factory. Gurwa's father has since joined them here. The remaining two children stay with Gurwa's father's family until enough money can be saved to bring them over as well. Gurwa's maternal grandmother, a widow, is also here, and she does much of the homemaking for the family.

As is typical of the families of youngsters in this group, money is a dominant concern. Always there is the responsibility to save funds to help others to emigrate; cousins and elder relatives are considered to be immediate family, and the sense of family responsibility includes them all. Consequently, an individual works not for him or herself plus two or three other people, but for perhaps a dozen or more. In many of these families only one parent is here as yet, and that one bears the entire financial burden. Unable to speak the language, and mainly unskilled workers to begin with, these breadwinners are able to secure work only as labourers, often running from a part-time job watering yards to cleaning fish to sweeping floors. They depend on the local ethnic community to establish contacts for them, and because their lives are bound to long days of sheer physical labour, they are unlikely to have the energy or resources to learn fluent English.

Their assimilation into Canadian culture will be very restricted. Consequently, they rely on the children to act as intermediaries. Their hope for a better life for themselves and—never forgetting—the rest of the family here and back "home" lies in the children's success in completing school and getting a regular job. By doing so, the burden of responsibility will shift from the parent(s) to the child, who, properly assimilated into this new culture, will presumably go farther and faster than the first generation immigrants could ever hope to do.

Many of these families have fled war, starvation or other impossible life conditions. Miguel's family came from Central America. He saw his best friend shot in the head as they walked down the street together in the capital city. Miguel was 11 at the time. Siu recalls her older sister engineering their escape from Laos to Thailand, where they hung on for three years awaiting entry to some sympathetic country. Their parents did not know they were leaving. Phong has never met his father, who remains in Vietnam. Nita came from the Philippines with her family, but shortly after, the parents divorced, the father left with two of the children, and a few years later, the mother became ill and died, leaving the two girls to manage for themselves. All these students are marked by these experiences, and they approach the

harsh demands of their lives with reserve and unquestioning commitment. Most of them have not had, and never will have, a childhood.

GURWA

I am call Gurwa. In Grade 9. I am 15 year now. What I can tell you is hard to say. I am not good to make a lot of conversations. Sometimes they doesn't understand me. Well, when first we here I can not talk one little bit. Well, I have friend of mine, she knows English, been here now 8 year. And I went to her and she told me some stuff like that and now I know a little bit. This let me to learn the language. My grammars—sometimes they really bad still. It's hard to me to understand all the time. But I make the homeworks, and when I don't have too much hungry I still working at school in the lunch.

This is a very clean school. I go to the ESL class. We, like, take a word and he explain what it mean. And then we write a lot in little sentence. Present tense or past tense. Talk about what we do on week end. Or holiday. Then we must write about. And then he just correct that thing. So I get lots of practice. Some student ask question. I like to listen. He kind and tell answer. At home teacher angry most time and not tell answer. Hit student and make to stand maybe on one foot, or sit like this (squats) and hold ears for maybe one, two hour. Not clean, the school and not have book, or stuff like here. Maybe part I think student work hard more there but I like here to me.

Some time ESL teacher let me read book to borrow. There's a lot of story like Seven Dwarf and Snow White and those kind. Sometimes I go to the library and borrow some book. I don't like read like, big book, because I'm learn, I—when I read it I feel sleepy. I like to read those, just one story or comedy. Sometimes my uncle rent video and I watch English movie. My family watch lots movie from India. On the video. And we watch English movie like "Friday the Thirteenth" and thing.

I guess I watch lots television. Come home from school, see two, maybe three show till supper. Then do the homeworks, maybe watch for more before I go to sleep. Girl doesn't go out much by self, so I stay in the home, help the grandmother to cook some. All the life you have to cook. The job and thing come and go but always the cook is happening. Talk to maybe friend on phone, go to store with grandmother, just like that.

Mother she work all long day till late night. She sew in factory. She sleep in morning so I don't see till maybe Friday sometime because she go to work before I come from school. My Father? Oh, he can't work. He had accident, then he can't work. He had trouble with his brain, is easy to forget. He still on medication. I don't know what wrong with his head. He have headaches and he can't feel past them everyday. He can't do any thing. He has to make operation.

I have two brother. No, I mean here I have one sister, one brother. Leave one sister one brother with family in India. They will maybe to come soon. We must have money for them to come. And aunts and cousins. Many family we to look after now. I am first child. I must help with little ones and be in house for them sometime. So I go to school, come for the homeworks and be here for my Mother. We are use to this. Some girl in my class go out from home with the friend, dance at school and such. Me I don't like to do. Not like to go in dark, be alone. And have to be help to my Mother too. Play with young ones when Uncle have friend over. Girls are never in the room when you talk about anything, so I just stay with brother and sister, help the Grandmother.

I know this girl Dari, also from my country but more year here than me. She grade 11 now my school. She marry this week. She marry Sikh man her family find for her. Like from home, he have gift for family, you call dow-ree? She meet him first time at wedding. They marry then she go back to school to finish. He go back to other city to work, wait for her. She is a very good girl in her family, live proper way for them. But I think not all too easy, because she have many Canadian way about her now. Still, she be good girl, get all paint up, veil, everything for wedding. And he come with family, meet her family, meet her, have big party. Wear turban. Do all old things for belong family.

I think too they have maybe a bit good luck. Me, I finish high school, look to job. Do not think of marry because my family still have many people to bring, must care for them first. I must help my Mother with money. I don't know what yet I do for job, but first finish school because no getting job with good pay without that. I know girl in my ESL

class. She from Philippine. Her sister and her here, her sister be mother to her. Mother and Father here before, but have many trouble, fight, get divorce. Father move to Toronto with two smaller children. Next thing, Mother get sick, die. So leave big sister and this girl alone. Big sister must work and help little sister and family still in Philippine. Little sister work in summer, help baby-sit and water garden. That way have bit more money. Sometime work mail envelopes for company in school time, like four hour after school some week. Big sister have boyfriend, engaged. But she cannot marry until little sister finish, get job. Little sister in Grade 12 now, want to go to university. Big sister have 22 years, think maybe five, seven year before marry, until little sister finish study and get job. She wait long time to marry, but she must be for family first. When little sister finish, she be for family and big sister to start own family.

That little sister not like most other in my ESL class. We got one from Vietnam, one from Laos, one from San Salvador, one from Germany, me and the one I tell you about try to go university. Most we think just get job, university too hard, take too long. Just get job quick, maybe work some nurse job or if good with machine fix car, maybe cook something. Sometime can have other job, save money faster, too. In summer I work on farm, pick vegetable, make the weed out. Very hard, very hot. Sometime I think to swim but I just work because I think of my aunts and my cousins who need the money to come, and all my family. So most in class, no matter where come from, like me I think. Work hard now, maybe have fun later in life.

In my day I am get up at 6:30. Wash and do the braid. My Grandmother sometime have breakfast for us, or I not have time. We eat food my Grandmother make from home. Our country thing, maybe you don't know these food. I take maybe something for lunch, but many time I pass the lunch in catch up homeworks. I take bus for school, get there for maybe half-hour early. I can work on things, always behind. It take me so long to read and look up word I don't know. I must understand in my own language and then make into English. Take me a long time sometime. I read the big book, make me to feel sleepy, so hard to think. Then I go to the class, just talk to friend a bit, come home, play with little brother and sister, help the Grandmother with cook the dinner. Sometime go with her to buy food, help with English because she cannot speak, too old to learn. We go often to store to buy our own kind food, she speak then, but very long way, two hours on bus there and then back.

We go sometime to our church, see people we know there. Read our Bible every day. Sometime friend from church come to see Uncle or Mother, maybe bring friend for me, visit, talk about home and school here. And I phone some friend sometime from school, but not much. I don't like to go out too much, and they have different life. They nice to me and all, and sometime we laugh a bit together, but mostly in class, by locker, that sort of thing. Some girl they have boyfriend, but not me. I must keep to home and help my family. Night time I do homeworks, maybe two hours. Go to bed maybe 10:00. That's it.

For week end Mother work, so help the Grandmother, maybe sometime go for walk with her and little ones. Help sister with homeworks. She in Grade 6. Brother in Grade 4, not have much homeworks yet. Clean house. We many people in one house, much work to do and must be clean. But we very lucky to be all together, have good chance in this good country. When I first come I think I want to go home. Everything so strange. But now I use to things. Become Canadian. This my country for life. Not so easy for Grandmother. She very old. But cannot stay alone back there. Must come with her daughter, be in home together. So we help her now try to make for her like home because she my Mother's mother, very special.

So I must work hard to help. In the school I try to get good grade, but it is not easy. I must still go to ESL class. And I still think in my language, so take me three, maybe four time longer to get work done. I get C, sometime B for my work mostly, but I am not very smart, just work hard. Try to work at night, maybe two, three hour, but house very noisy, movie on tv and people talk, make it hard. So I try to work other time a bit, before school, lunch time. I not like Math so much, but it more easy for me because the numbers, you know. So Math is okay. I like the Socials, but it hard, for the words. I like to know about the other country, though. And when we learn about Canada this is good for me understand history and how the thing work here. The French is very hard. We do not talk much, but must remember many thing, and same with Science, many names and chemicals I do not understand much and have to ask many questions from my friends in class and if the teacher has time. We have to take the PE but I do not care for this. I rather spend the time to look up word, learn more to help my study faster. Play games, run around is for play, maybe after school for some kid, but me I need to study. I rather be home, use dictionary, look up thing in books we bring from India, this better for me than PE. Maybe more ESL time. Oh well.

I think thing get maybe a bit better now. I have work hard and look like okay to finish school. We have home with Uncle and my Father here now. Maybe others come soon. Mother work hard at job, with money for family. We move many times when we first here, sometime live just two bedroom, very crowd. But now Uncle have Uncle for family, be together. Sometime I remember when we come here. I scared. I can't, I didn't eat, because...I didn't eat, just sit in the plane. I wanted to throw down. And then we get to airport, see Uncle , and so many things different. We move to apartment with him, and one day I go out to look and get lost. Walk a little block, turn corner, lost. Just walk and walk, could not ask for help, write address, nothing. So scared. Family out to walk for me, look everywhere. Finally find me, walking around. I was so scared I felt to cry, but I didn't. Then they find me. But it was so long, many hour. And the whole house is so scared, I want to cry now.

Conclusion

The children in this group in many cases lead two lives: they are Canadian school students, and they are members of tight-knit ethnic communities. At times, there are great stresses on these youngsters as they attempt to move from one setting to the other, because there are frequently conflicts of values between the two. Gurwa, for example, cannot in all conscience consider having a social life such as the one her Canadian-born classmates have. She does not walk to the mall with friends. She does not shop with them for popular clothing. She does not date, play sports or participate in school activities. She does not have any close friends, and certainly no "best" friend. Her responsibilities are, first, to her Mother and Grandmother, and then to her family as a whole. These responsibilities at present involve helping at home, bringing in money when she can, and of course finishing high school. Once she has done that she will be able to become a major economic contributor to the family welfare and will continue in that role until there are other, younger members to step in, at which time she will presumably be free to marry. She will in all likelihood marry someone from her own ethnic community, in a traditional ceremony, and will adopt a fairly traditional lifestyle. Her own children will be more assimilated into Canadian culture than she will ever be, and perhaps they may not even speak Gurwa's native tongue fluently, as she will always do. But always she will bear an unstinting sense of financial and moral responsibility for the extended family, whether the members of that family are here, waiting their turns to come here, or remaining in the homeland, dependent on assistance sent by their Canadian relatives.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Summary

The learners in this group represent a wide range in terms of ethnic background, socio-economic status, educational objectives and academic abilities. Some attend independent schools as a last effort to find help for particular learning problems; others choose an independent school because of religious affiliations; still others attend because community scholarships have opened that educational door for them. Not surprisingly, given the range of reasons for enrolment in private schools, the learners' attitudes are widely varied. Some students are so exemplary as to nearly defy credibility: they are never late, their work is always done; they are popular, their grades are high; they are the morally, socially and academically fittest of their peer group. Others fight life, and school, every step of the way. They miss classes, miss the bus, stay home, neglect assignments, and at best "put in time" at school.

What these learners all have in common, however, is that their life in an independent school is life in a model world. How they view that world and how successfully they perform in it varies, but each sees the private school setting as preferable to the alternatives they have heard about or experienced. Those who feel positively about their roles as learners feel that the independent school offers more challenge, more concentrated environments for learning, and higher standards. Those who have problems as learners feel that at least in the "safe" setting of the independent school they are among their own kind of people.

Jamie and Dana are two independent school students. They are both 17. Jamie is in Grade 12 and will graduate this year. Dana is in Grade 9, and is dyslexic. Repetition of two earlier grades and a slow rate of progress academically have

impeded Dana so far. Now, at 17, Dana is more interested in social life than in studying—especially since studying is such a laborious and unrewarding process. As a result, it remains unclear as yet whether Dana will finish high school or not.

Jamie represents the learners who have spent their entire school lives in the independent school system. They are competitive youngsters, and they regard their grades as important measures of their performance and their acceptability (socially and academically). "Oh", says Jamie, who thinks that grades of 90%-plus are just 'normal', "once in a blue moon you might get an 85, but (shrugs)...hey!". Doing poorly in a subject for Jamie is the 86% in Algebra, or the 90% in Chemistry: "Yep, those are my low ones, allright".

Jamie is the editor of the class yearbook, a member of the student council and chairperson of the Grad Committee. In addition, there is work tutoring other students, an active interest in drama and work in a community church-related youth group. The latter involves charity work in the community, social activities (sports and dances), and more tutoring. Jamie plays badminton and maintains an active social life on the telephone. There isn't much time for tv, but Jamie tries to watch the news and current affairs shows. Around home Jamie helps out, but there is no roster of chores assigned: school work is given precedence over domestic duties.

Teachers are delighted with Jamie. The academic performance is excellent, the social skills are well-polished. They feel that Jamie is perhaps, well, a little "adult" for 17 years of age, citing a precociousness of expression and perception as evidence of this maturity. For Jamie's part, school is all business. Good grades are the ticket to good university entrance. University degrees are the tickets to good jobs, travel and nice cars (Jamie wants a Lambourghini). To these ends, Jamie shows a remarkable pragmatism about the courses and the teachers. The science teacher, Jamie says, is not doing his job: newly-trained and inexperienced, he cannot keep the students up to the level they were achieving prior to his arrival. This costs the students grades on the provincial exams, opines Jamie. The kids pay in the long run for mediocrity in teaching. Jamie has no time for mediocrity.

Jamie is the kind of person teachers describe as the sort everyone would like to be best friends with. Moreover, Jamie is an active member of the school infrastructure. Monitor, editor, tutor, Jamie reflects the order and values of the school. Rules are mechanisms meant to make school life run more smoothly and efficiently, and Jamie has no patience with wasting time. The school year is all too short to do all the preparation necessary for the final exams, but more than that, Jamie places a high value on social mobility and social skills. For this reason, leadership among the members of the graduating class is another kind of success for Jamie, and it is perhaps as important as the academic success: Jamie intuits—or perhaps already understands—that doing things well is just as important as doing them correctly. School provides Jamie with a model world in which to develop and perfect skills of a variety of sorts, and within that secure environment, Jamie blossoms. Given the narrow range of experience in life so far, some of Jamie's views are perhaps a little simplistic; nevertheless, Jamie and other learners of the same type are thriving in the independent school setting.

Dana hates school. Undiagnosed as dyslexic until Grade 5, Dana ricocheted through one school after another. In each new classroom, unable to read, Dana fell behind, got frustrated, reacted badly and was labelled "unmanageable". Moved to other schools for "problem" children, the situation repeated itself until Dana, lost and mistrustful, not knowing what the problem was, became hostile to teachers and other students. In desperation, at one point Dana's mother even kept her child home for two months while she cast about for some solution to the problem.

When Dana's dyslexia was finally diagnosed, the child was registered in an independent school which specialized in helping learning disabled youngsters. Since then Dana has made progress, but it will never be easy. On a good day, as Dana's mother says, "Dana likes lunch hour and recess...and Art—sometimes". Dana's reaction to school life is to avoid as much of it as possible. This involves missing the bus frequently, and arriving late to class—or not getting there at all. Dana also finds the "need" to "take a day off" rather frequently. Assignments are not completed promptly or completely, and, overall Dana does not yet perform up to the potential assessments tests show to be possible.

At 17, Dana is very interested in dating and shopping and parties, and unlike Jamie, for whom the school exerts a kind of overall floodlight of influence both in and out of school, Dana forgets school upon walking out the door at 3:00 — and sometimes even sooner. Summarizing Dana's chances of staying in school long enough to complete high school, a teacher offers this recipe: "Tutoring once every morning, and constant hope!" Dana's mother and father are separated, and Dana's home life is somewhat unstable. There is work to do at home, but not in the sense of chores asssigned to

Dana: meals need to be made by the first person home, and cleaning up needs to be done. Dana lives in some perpetual disorder. The telephone is a vital lifeline for Dana, and the television offers an escape into the happy, trouble-free orderly lifes of the situation comedy families.

JAMIE

Oh, hi, I hope I didn't keep you waiting. I had to see Mrs. Braithwaite about some ads for the yearbook and we just got it all sorted out. It meant I missed part of my Chem class too, so I'll have to catch up on that later. It would be that one, wouldn't you know...I mean, I'm suffering dramatically in that class...not that she's a bad teacher. I just don't have the hang of it. Getting 90's and high 80's in that. It'll ruin me for sure.

But it's great, isn't it, when things just fit together. I mean, in History, like that's my very favourite, I'm just cruising that course. I get what's going on. We get that late in the afternoon, and when it's hot out, like everyone's just kind of vegged out, and even sometimes I feel too blah for words, but the teacher is so great, and the material is, like, so Important, you know...like why we are and how we got to be here and what made our country run the way it does and all. I mean, before I know it, I'm just mapping it up and making notes like fury. So...oh, sorry...they need me for a sec... can I——?

Yeah. Oh, excuse me for that. They were from the Grad Committee, needed to know where we're meeting after I'm through here. All the head honchos have to get together today to get the final details ready, all the input from everyone, budget, timetable, all that. Anyhow, where were we? Classes. Well my favourites as you can see are the Arts, like English and History. Sciences, well, I'll do allright but my heart's not in it.

So when I finish classes today, I have badminton and then I'm meeting a friend from across town to go go over plans for a workshop our Young People's group is having on the weekend. Then it's home for dinner and homework. I guess I put in about 2-3 hours a night, unless there's, you know, a really big project due or something. But I'm too busy to let the deadlines creep up on me. I mean there are the kids who're crashing through like three hours of work and test in a half-hour for the next day, but not me. Mainly I sort out in class what I need to do, ask the teacher for help if I don't understand parts of the assignment, and then it's all written up in my assignment book, so I know what needs to be done, and when. That way I can decide which things to do first. It's really worth while to do the work at this school. I guess I don't really know, because I've never been to a public school, but it seems to me that in a private school you get more instruction. The classes are smaller, for one thing, and the teachers are more likely to want to be there. It's not just a job for them. I think the standards are higher, too. When I talk to kids in public school, we've done stuff a year or two before them lots of times. I think we have a better chance, too, because we can get more individual attention...the teachers really know who you are and what your potential is. And if you're not reaching your potential, "wham...." you hear about it, Fast! And I think we get some pretty good teachers here, because they think this is a pretty challenging atmosphere. It doesn't always work that way...last year for a while we had a new Biology teacher, who hadn't taught, like he was fresh out of university and he just didn't know the course. Well it was really bad for us and we lost out in the long run because he just couldn't teach us properly and we weren't ready for the exams like we usually are. He's gone now, so things are better.

Next year I guess I'll go to university. I'm really torn between doing that and travelling for awhile. I've travelled quite a bit with my folks and my sister...Mexico. Hawaii. Europe for 3 weeks last year. But I'd kind of like to get out on my own. I'm thinking of a university back east, McGill maybe, or something like that. I just don't know yet...it's so hard to choose, isn't it? Anyhow, it's great that you folks are talking to everyone, and I think it's terrific that you're including the students in your survey. I hope I've helped.

DANA

School for me? Well, it's...a hassle. No, actually, not all the time, it isn't...sometimes it's pretty fun, like when we do Art, because I'm okay at that. My hardest subject is English. I do not like English because I have problems with spelling. And I use a lot of slang, you'll see. I've tried to stop using "ain't", because my English teacher here, everytime

I use "ain't", she nails me: "Don't use 'ain't...it's slang!' So I get a little bit upset when they correct me when I'm trying. So...

Besides I quite often don't make it to school...I rush and all, but I seem to miss the bus and it's a long ride...an hour or more...to get here. I hate the bus. It's the school's own bus, goes all around and picks up everyone so we're on it for like days before we even get to school. And there's no one to talk to. I mean there's a lot of harsh preps here—kids who're starch-heads. You know what I mean? Oh. Well, I dunno how to explain it. Starch-heads...they'll grow up to be politicians. They've got lots of money to spend, nothing matters very much to them, like life's easy okay, eh?

Now I like to spend money. I mean shop till you drop. This is my major sport. We just go to the mall and go for it. But Mom isn't making very much right now, and we owe some of that to the Co-op where we live, and some goes to the church every month. So a little babysitting money, stuff like that. Means a few video games at the mall, maybe a movie.

But I have to do my best to schedule. I forget things and I have to write them down. See, I keep this little book. If I get behind in my schedule I end up regretting it later on that day and I end up staying up real late. I regret it because if I don't get it done I end up procrastinating, so I regret it, see? Like I didn't do my dog's clean-up after school one week and on the weekend when I did it, I regretted it because it was so much poo all over the whole entire back yard. The only thing that really bugs me is I get mad at myself whenever I do make simple mistakes and I've been told "that's the dumbest thing you could have done." I get mad at myself and I start smashing my head against walls. I get so mad I smash myself maybe five times against every...mmm-hmmmm....yesss. Uh hum. You should see some of the things I've said. I wanted to kill myself last year, like I was on a suicidal mission, because my dad was going to get married. I felt that I was going to explode because he had just went over the divorce and that was like a ton of bricks on me. And this marrying thing isn't so bad as that, but it's there, you know. I'm mad. I don't want my dad to get married. Anyhow, he's trying to help me understand all this. He has a new punishment for me. It's that every time I say something bad about myself, I've gotta say two good things. So may be I won't screw up so much, he thinks...I guess. Anyhow. He doesn't live with us, and I only see him about once a week, so he can't know all about me. Good thing, with some of my marks. Oh well, "teachers are for teaching, and parents are for loving", or so they say, don't they? (laughs). Actually, it kind of makes me laugh, if you wanna know, I mean when I put things together...like I think of how I slave to try to get it right at school, like maybe on a quiz, and I do okay here—like in this school—but when I go back, next year, to regular school, I'll be lost again...anyways what I laugh about is one of our teachings, from our church, that says "You have to be a slave to be Number 1" That's me, boy.

Conclusion

Jamie and Dana are both leaders in their groups. They do not have any really close, "best" friends, and their associates tend to come from their groups at school. Dana has a wider range of acquaintances, having been in public school for some years and kept those contacts active since coming to the independent school. Also, for Dana, the independent school is a period of "treatment" for a problem. Soon there will be a return to public school and, accordingly, a return to being a "loser" academically. Jamie's world revolves around the school and most friendships are formed there. Teachers and peers describe both Jamie and Dana as "good listeners", as "counsellors"; within their groups, they are the brightest stars...Jamie for academic and social excellence, Dana for a sparkling sociability and for the inclination to associate with other learning disabled kids. In short, Dana has learned at an early age to secure an advantageous position or to not join the group.

For all the differences between them, Jamie and Dana have much in common. Their days begin early: 6:30 am. They make whatever breakfast they have, and pack something for lunch. Theirs is a long bus ride across town to the school each attends, and they do not reach home again until about 5:30 in the evening. Supper is sometimes a family affair, depending on who is home to cook/eat together. Dana, who probably needs it more, does less homework that Jamie, who does 2-3 hours nightly. Dana is required to read at least one half-hour daily, and keeps a log book to show that the reading has been done. Some other assignments do get done as deadlines close in. Dana is easily rattled by becoming disorganized. Jamie is more competitive and self-controlled than Dana, but both are aware that the sheltered world of the independent school offers them...preference? protection?...it depends upon the learner and upon the situation;

but the learners in this group all feel strongly and positively about their associations with the independent schools, even, as in Dana's case, where they dislike school.

As far as the parents and the learners are concerned, the independent schools are a good situation which could use some improvement. More funding, greater community involvement and more extensive parental involvement are two key issues. They would like to see even smaller classes, although the classes Dana and Jamie attend are significantly smaller than those in public schools today. Some feel that there should be even more preparation for university entrance. Although Jamie and learners like her think that the primary advantage of the independent school is that it already functions as a college-prep institution, they feel that more of a good thing could never be too much. Some suggest that more work-preparation programming would be in order. For Dana this would be a good thing. And from the students, lesser complaints, revolving around more/less boys/girls, and the universal loathing of uniforms.

Profiling the learners in the independent schools, it appears that one-half of the students have, or have had learning disabilities of some sort. Half (although not necessarily the same individuals) attend independent schools for reasons of religious affiliation. These learners often think in terms of careers which involve missions work of some sort. These learners are aggressive about learning, even when they have to struggle with a learning disability. As one teacher described a particular learner: "He's a pit bull for knowledge...he locks on and he just won't let go." Far less than half of the learners in this group come from families who are socially or economically "advantaged." In fact, many come from low-income, single-parent families of mixed racial origin. What links them all, however, is the fact that they are different from the public school learners. At least, that's the way they see it: the child who is physically small for his age sees security in his small independent school world; the girl who is dyslexic finds others like herself in her independent school; the deeply committed child of one spiritual affiliation or another, finds kindred spirits in the church school. All of these individuals of course can be found in the public school system; what is significant here is that from the point of view of the independent school learner, the difference he or she perceives is a kind of badge of distinction which gives him or her a solid, credible identity within a world which is of manageable structure and proportion.

4. Views of School Children: Doing Work, Teaching to Learn, and Having Fun

Thus far we have described the learners of British Columbia in two ways. First, we presented statistical data to derive a composite picture of our school children by looking at patterns of enrolment, societal trends, types of schools and the variety of programs available. Then we moved from the statistical data directly into personal profiles representative of the variety of children attending our schools. Each profile is a composite of a particular kind of child —a native Canadian, a new Canadian, a visible minority child or a child who is a Canadian of three or more generations, a heritage Canadian. In our study we found these types of children—both advantaged and disadvantaged, rural and urban —to be most typical of youngsters attending schools throughout the province.

Now we explore those things the children themselves say are most important about their schooling. We found that the goals, priorities and interests identified by them clearly determine the place of schooling in their lives. By seeing the children's lives as captured in profiles and by determining what is most important to them, we can better determine those educational policies which will directly affect their lives.

In our interviews we asked each student to take us through a typical school day in their lives. We learned a great deal about them. They described their goals in life and how they see schooling with respect to these goals. They talked about how they learn and don't learn, about how teachers teach—almost everybody had a favourite—and about their families, friends and preferred activities. Quite apart from school being a place where they are required to go and 'do work' every day, these children, with few exceptions, presented their school experiences as embedded within a complex social world. Most importantly, we found that students' sense of self-worth as individuals and as members of their school community is closely tied to the nature of their experiences as learners.

With respect to the learning experience, it is noteworthy that students tend to make implicit or explicit distinctions between doing school work and learning. Work is something expected, assigned and required by somebody else, usually a teacher. Learning, in this sense has a basically utilitarian meaning and students will use the term 'learning' to refer specifically to school work. But learning also has another, more personally meaningful connotation for many youngsters. It is pursuing those things that really interest them, often passionately, and the expectations and requirements are willingly self-imposed or peer generated.

With this distinction in mind, the children we interviewed seemed to sort themselves into roughly four categories. There are those who learn primarily in school; those who learn primarily out of school; those, the majority, who do work to get through school; and those who don't associate school either with work or learning.

Those who learn primarily in school or, in other words, who view school as a place of learning in a meaningful sense comprise a very small part (about 5%) of our sample. They were, in most cases, attending private schools.

The majority of students saw the work of schooling as like "death and taxes," inevitable and unavoidable. To them it is, not unrealistically, the thing you have to do to get a job or pursue post-secondary education or training. Students, teachers, and parents generally agree that it is desirable to do well at schoolwork.

About one-fourth of the sample described their most absorbing interests as non-school based, though possibly school related. These included such activities as music, writing, competitive individual and team sports, or running small businesses. The striking thing about these youngsters is the commitment and devotion they bring to their various pursuits even when the time needed, the challenges they have to meet, or the rigorous practice or training requirements seem overwhelming to them. Ideally, this is the kind of commitment parents and educators would like them to bring to their schooling.

The remaining students attend school, if at all, in order to be with their friends, as a place to meet non-school friends, or because they have nowhere else to go. For these youngsters (about 10%), a particular teacher or counsellor will often serve as a surrogate parent, frequently providing the only encouragement and support they receive to see themselves as worthwhile and productive individuals.

These are not invariant categories by any means as there can be overlap among them. For example, a student with a passionate interest outside school can also be achieving reasonably well as part of the "death and taxes" group. In fact, this is often a parental requirement for allowing so much time for the preferred activity. However, the way the students see themselves, how they relate to the schooling experience, and their hopes for successful achievement and productive futures are grounded in the way they perceive themselves as learners.

Interestingly enough there are two common themes that bind these various groups together. First, we found that in those situations where school work and meaningful learning intersect, students were invariably describing a dynamic, and to them, very effective teacher who acted as a catalyst to bring these two realms together. They described the teacher as one who has the respect, and in many cases, the love of students. No preferred curriculum content appears to be associated with this and it does not seem to matter whether students are urban or rural, advantaged or disadvantaged, secondary or elementary, 'preppies,' 'punkers,' 'headbangers' or 'geeks,' they all have remarkably similar descriptions of those qualities that constitute good teaching. They see a direct connection between good teaching and the enhancement of learning. A composite profile of preferred teaching styles and teacher characteristics will be discussed presently.

A second common theme among the majority of students is the nature and type of goals they set for their futures. Our children have articulated largely instrumental life goals for themselves and they expect the schools to prepare them accordingly. They see their teachers as having sole responsibility for managing classrooms and curriculum delivery in such a way as to maximize every student's potential for school success. For the majority of students, the teacher who can't control the learning situation in the classroom is more than just not deserving of respect, such teachers are seen as a potential threat to students' chances for academic success. For senior secondary students, this situation can become a serious concern as they must compete with others for limited places in post-secondary institutions. These students regard the inept teacher as conceivably jeopardizing opportunities for achieving their goals.

In sum, these common themes derived from the interviews demonstrate that students are very sensitive to the close connection between learning and teaching, and also see good teaching as a major contributor to academic success. A third theme, more implied than explicit, arises when considering what students have to say about how their learning takes place. Like so many other aspects of schooling, the learning process for them is as much a social experience as it is an experience of individual success or failure. Not only do they like to learn with their friends or in groups, their success as learners appears to be an important determinant of social status, acceptability, or notoriety.

Up to this point we have briefly described some types of student categories and some common themes that arise from our interviews. Within these areas there are important variations that can potentially have direct bearing on the kinds of decisions made about schooling. The next step then is to present a more detailed description of those things our students have to say about their life goals and about learning and teaching. The nature of their relationships to family and friends, neighbourhood, church and community, and their extracurricular activities and paid work commitments are also discussed where pertinent.

In the interests of time and manageability the sample size of our child study research project was kept intentionally moderate and can therefore be seen as indicative rather than representative of B.C. school children. In light of this, our interpretations of the data should be regarded as approximations rather than as representative findings. As outlined in the student profiles above, we interviewed girls and boys from urban and rural areas, from educationally advantaged and disadvantaged homes, and from various ethnic backgrounds. Most children attend public elementary and secondary schools but a small part of our sample is enrolled in a variety of private schools.

Goals

During the interviews children were asked to talk about their future plans and how they see schooling as contributing toward achievement of their goals. We wanted to know whether or not children have goals, and if so, what they are. Do different groups of children have the same or different kinds of future plans? How clear are they about how to achieve their goals? How knowledgeable are parents about the goals of their children, and are they supportive of their children's plans? Children's responses to questions about goals contain important similarities, but some differences must also be noted.

In answer to the question as to whether or not B.C. school children have goals, the majority of students responded with at least one statement about their future plans. About 80% of our students voiced a desire to attend post secondary institutions—stating university, technical or vocational interests. Thus nearly all children plan to pursue further professional or vocational interests after graduating from secondary school. This means in fact that very few children see high school completion as the termination of their formal schooling. It is rather an important step toward preparation for careers and other pursuits that may involve lifelong learning.

Both boys and girls equally expressed a desire to further pursue university, technical or vocational careers. However, some differences are notable. Of the boys, half preferred technical/vocational over university training. Of the girls, nearly two-thirds planned to attend university rather than technical/vocational schools. It is apparent that girls see their life goal options in a much more limited way than do boys. This points to an urgent need for educators to provide girls with information about technical or vocational options they currently do not even seem to consider as viable choices for their futures.

Of children designated as educationally advantaged by their schools, three-quarters are planning to attend university and most of the remainder would like further technical training. All of these children had some goals in mind and none were undecided or unconcerned about their futures. Less than a third of the disadvantaged children planned to attend university. About 40% planned on technical/vocational careers and of the remainder most had given no consideration to their futures. Often, these are the children who 'fail into' non-academic school programs and perceive themselves to be unsuccessful learners. Thus a substantial portion of children deemed educationally disadvantaged may benefit from a more concentrated effort on the part of educators to help them see the advantages of both academic and practically oriented school programs. Because our children assign both self-esteem and social status to successful learning, it is worth exploring options that will allow all children to benefit from a variety of school programs, including academic, vocational/technical and fine arts orientations. It is most disturbing to realize that so many children leave school, early or late, with feelings of self-defeat and failure.

Not all children had instrumental life goals in mind. Some had goals that were more altruistic in nature, involving family or community services or helping others in some meaningful way. Interestingly, children considering the more altruistic options for themselves were exclusively from rural settings. Fully one-quarter of the rural children voiced more personal or altruistic goals. Further, only one-third indicated that they wished to attend university, the remainder choosing technical/vocational careers. Conversely, two-thirds of children from urban settings choose university over technical/vocational schooling. No urban children considered more personal or altruistic choices as priorities for themselves. Of the children having no plans, there were twice as many from urban as from rural areas. This indicates that urban children are more in an either/or situation than those from rural areas. Either they have careers (mostly university oriented) in mind or they appear to have no direction or plans. Rural children, on the other hand, allow themselves a much wider range of options for consideration. Further, given the well-known relationship between years of schooling and lifetime income, university bound urban children will have distinct material advantages over their rural peers. Educators in rural and urban settings need to be sensitive to these differences.

Looking at children's life goal preferences in terms of their ethnic backgrounds indicates there are few differences between the groups. Over two-thirds plan to attend post-secondary institutions. About half intend to go to university and the remainder to technical/vocational schools. About twice as many new and Native Canadians as heritage Canadians choose personal or altruistic over more instrumental goals. None of the Native Canadians interviewed expressed a desire or inclination to go to university and few were clear about their vocational options. None had any realistic ideas on how to go about identifying options and making plans for their futures. Though not designated as such by our sampling design, most Native Canadians can be considered as educationally disadvantaged. As a group

they may be considered as high risk children requiring necessary if not urgent educational interventions that are designed to meet their special needs. Finally, no visible minority students voiced interest in more personal or altruistic goals and those students having no plans were equally represented across ethnic groups.

Of all the students interviewed, just over half know what they want to do and how to go about reaching their goals. These tend to be educationally advantaged youngsters who are successful academic achievers. Also, their parents tend to be knowledgeable about and supportive of their children's goals. About one-third of the students know what they want to do but have given little thought to, or are ill-informed about how to achieve or realize their goals. These children tend to be educationally disadvantaged, with parents who are quite vague or uninformed about their children's plans. Many parents and students of the educationally disadvantaged groups voiced concerns about the lack of supportive, continuous, and individual vocational and career counselling available in the schools. Given that about one-quarter of the disadvantaged students have no plans or goals, it may be desirable to make vocational and career counselling services available to both the students and their parents. Parents who felt at a loss about how to direct and encourage their children identified this as a high priority need.

The foregoing discussion on goals and priorities make it clear that children place a high value on the nature and quality of their schooling. Success or failure in school is a major determinant of young people's sense of self-worth and of the nature and type of life goals they determine as personally attainable. Thus these observations provide the rationale that underscores children's awareness of the sensitive relationship between learning and teaching. It is the nature of this relationship as experienced by them that contributes significantly toward the direction their lives may take. Therefore the rest of this chapter presents our children's views of how they best learn, and how teachers can optimize the instructional, individual and social aspects of classroom learning.

Learning and Teaching

It is evident that children have articulated largely instrumental goals for themselves. It would seem reasonable to infer from this that they would hold quite utilitarian views of just how learning should take place in the classroom. Certainly from a mass production point of view, our schools would be in the business of getting as many pupils through as quickly and successfully as possible. Thus teachers would deliver curriculum efficiently and students would do the school work required to get themselves through the grades as best they can. Under these circumstances the lecture method would serve as the best way to deliver the most information to the largest number of students. The students, for their part, would best remember information learned by drill and practice both in and out of the classroom. This is a somewhat bleak view of the learning process, but it has a certain utility.

It is, of course, quite true that most students do want to get through school successfully, and at the same time as their grade and age peers. Thus a utilitarian view of schooling has some basis in reality, both for students and teachers, and students do tend to voice opinions of an instrumental nature. This is however, quite deceptive. The data from our interviews indicate that students' views of how they successfully learn and what constitutes good teaching practices are decidedly contradictory to a utilitarian view of schooling.

In the following, we will present students' views on what helps them to learn. Then students descriptions of those characteristics and qualities they associate with good teachers and good teaching is discussed. Parents' observations and interests are also noted.

Learning

There is an overwhelming consensus among students about the necessity for developing and maintaining positive teacher/student relationships. Students want teachers to treat them fairly, respectfully, and to take a personal interest in them as individuals. Students voiced a genuine appreciation for those teachers that somehow manage to get around to every student in the room. This relates especially to secondary school teachers, who students realize may see as many as 150 students on a given day.

The majority of students noted the value of classroom question, answer and discussion periods. They see this as providing them with opportunities to clarify their own understanding of the material and to learn from others, both from the teacher and from their peers. This appears to be one important aspect of the social nature of learning.

Further, there is a general consensus among students that they require sufficient time to absorb and practise material they are expected to know. This suggests that students need time to consolidate learning before moving on to different material. Related to this is the need expressed by one- fourth of the students that teachers take the time to make sure learning materials are appropriate for them as individuals. Thus a substantial number of students appear to experience difficulty with classroom learning because of a lack of general background information or of important prior knowledge about what is being taught.

One-quarter of the students said that they get much more enjoyment out of learning when their teachers provide opportunities for students' contribution to school work. They think their contributions can be quite innovative and creative. They would like to be able to make choices about what they learn and how to go about it. In short, they want to be participants in, and not just recipients of, the learning process. This is another important component of the social side of learning.

One very disturbing finding is that some 40% of students stated they had difficulty understanding spoken English. These are a mix of educationally disadvantaged and English as a second language students. They stated that teachers need to speak slowly and in simple language. Teachers must demonstrate as well as explain. Comprehension of material should be checked regularly and teachers should provide extra tutoring in English. The enormous difficulty such students must have in classrooms where teachers rely heavily on recitation or lecture methods of instruction can readily be appreciated. It is important to note that language barriers are not exclusively associated with ESL students. Many other students appear to require some supportive structures to help them overcome language difficulties as well.

Fully one-half of the students commented on what is not being taught at school. They see teachers placing emphasis on the quantity of curriculum material to be covered at the expense of teaching students how to learn. Many parents also commented on this issue. Despite teacher emphasis on the content of learning few students stated or implied that what they learn in school has particular value for them. Rather, students expressed the need to learn about how to develop independent thinking skills, how to approach learning new material, and how to absorb and apply their learning to other situations. One senior secondary student even expressed the wish that teachers would get together and integrate related curriculum materials across subjects so students could more readily make these connections for themselves. As an aside, he also stated that this effort on the part of teachers would more closely regulate homework expectations, hopefully reducing the amount of time required to spend actually doing homework (this is a fine example of the positive side of utilitarian thinking—a budding efficiency expert in the making).

For many students learning is a social activity. This became evident when we asked students what they did to help themselves learn. Their responses varied somewhat but again, an overwhelming majority said that the first thing they do is ask someone else for help. Educationally advantaged students tend to ask both peers and teachers equally often. Disadvantaged students prefer to ask their peers first, but would also ask teachers for help if needed. Students like to do homework, assignments and projects with their friends. Studying, practising and reviewing schoolwork takes place in cafeterias, libraries, and over the telephone in schools and homes all over the province. Because students express a decided preference for organizing, planning and working together, identifying and implementing a social learning climate would likely contribute positively toward successful school learning.

When looking at what students have to say about learning it is clear that successful learning and good teaching are intricately connected. Children's descriptions of good teaching are mirror reflections of their assessments of what best helps them to learn. A discussion of their consensus on good teaching follows.

Teaching

Over half the students state that the way material is presented can have strong positive or negative effects on learning. This includes both the ways in which teachers motivate them to learn and methods of instructional delivery. Stu-

dents like very thorough and detailed explanations. They prefer illustrations by examples, analogies and demonstrations. For new material, lots of practice and review is considered essential. Students are sensitive to perceived teacher expertise in areas they are teaching and to the kind and quality of personal interest teachers bring to their subjects. Students prefer teachers who model excitement about what they teach and are personally involved in their subject. They particularly like teachers to 'liven the content' with real life examples and make material understandable within the context of everyday life as much as possible.

Teachers' interpersonal skills were frequently associated with teaching effectiveness. As mentioned above, students value good rapport with their teachers. Teachers should have good communication skills, have a good sense of humour, and most importantly, should not belittle students or "put them down." A characteristic of preferred teachers that emerged consistently is that students want to be able to trust their teachers. This means several things. First, students want to be able to approach teachers on a confidential basis when needed. This is especially true of those students needing help to cope with school and life problems in general. Second, teachers should be consistent and explicit about their expectations of students, both behaviourally and academically. Students appear to prefer structured settings where conduct and requirements for successful achievement are known, enforced and understood. As we show in the chapters on Goals, Learning and Teaching, and Rights and Responsibilities, the development of moral character should be given a more explicit place in the school curriculum.

Because some students have experienced the benefits of being taught specific learning strategies, it is worthwhile noting what they are. These students, though in a minority, spoke enthusiastically about the helpfulness of such strategies in preventing school work from becoming overwhelming. One native Canadian student described moving from unsuccessful to successful learning experiences because he had been taught strategies to help him learn. Other students developed their own successful strategies.

Students who feel overwhelmed by the amount of content to be covered have learned to organize information in "chunks." They may use an acronym to organize the chunks thus allowing absorption and retention of information in smaller, more manageable pieces. Some students have developed strategies for using key words or other pertinent clues to act as memory aids. One student described the improvement in her academic performance when she could manage to learn primarily in the auditory mode. She found talking or singing the information out loud very helpful. Whether these skills are spontaneously developed or systematically taught, students were quite vocal about their helpfulness. This suggests that many students may potentially benefit from the ability to apply learning strategies relevant to particular curriculum materials. Indeed, a substantial number of students expressed the need to develop thinking and learning skills as aids to successful learning. It is noteworthy that the advice of some of these students is similar to the advice of many educational researchers, as we show in Chapter 8.

Given the clarity with which school children are able to describe the constituents of successful teaching and learning, the question arises as to just why so many students sustain a mechanical and instrumental view of schooling. It must be borne in mind that students' descriptions presented here are culled from statements about particular teachers from whom they experienced the joy of learning. No students indicated that these characteristics of positive learning and teaching constituted the majority of their school experiences. Most learning experiences associated with school work are at best neutral or at worst merely routine. Homework and study are part of that routine and the majority of students tend to comply with out-of-class work expectations in a routine way. Secondary students average about two and one-half hours per night, and elementary students about one half-hour. It is unfortunate that schooling is approached with passive compliance. It seems that much can be done to enhance school learning in such a way that it becomes more meaningful and enjoyable for our students. We need to pay careful attention to what they have to say about what learning and teaching means to them.

Another question arises as to just what students tend to do to make school life less tedious and more personally meaningful. The answer lies in becoming involved in extracurricular activities, both school and non-school based, seeing your friends, and having fun. What students do, and the way they go about it, is determined by a number of factors.

First, success at learning frequently determines the kinds of friends students have. Secondary students in particular will group themselves according to approaches to the importance of schooling. For example, 'headbangers' or 'punkers' will often feel sorry for the 'preppies' and 'geeks' who care only about the way they look or getting good grades. They see themselves as exclusively enjoying the benefits of close and mutually supportive friendships. They also see their

academic peers as missing out on the advantages of more practically oriented school subjects. Groups seldom interact, except negatively, and can be identified by the kinds of clothes they wear, their preferred hair styles, the space they claim as their territory within the school buildings or grounds and even by the language patterns they tend to employ. Thus students both negatively and positively have a strong sense of school community. Group affiliations and social networks can strongly affect learning. Outside of the nature of classroom learning, this aspect of the social side of schooling can have powerful implications for the development of self-worth and successful achievement during school and beyond. These informal, incidental influences on learning should not be left to chance. It is our opinion that each school staff should determine ways in which potentially negative aspects of the social side of schooling can be directed toward more positive outcomes for students.

Second, and related to the first, is that school is the place for meeting your friends and having 'fun.' Indeed students will even tend to rate classes on the basis of whether or not they are 'fun.' Extracurricular activities play an important role in this regard. Nearly all students have one or more particular interest in which they are involved. Usually sports, but frequently band, choir, drama, art or a variety of club activities are mentioned. Educationally advantaged children tend to dominate on student councils and in the organization of school social activities. Both advantaged and disadvantaged children tend to be equally involved in team and individual sports. The majority of advantaged children also have at least one other non-school based activity. Some, as mentioned above, pursue these activities with investments of large time commitments during evenings, weekends and summers. Disadvantaged children are frequently involved in school based extracurricular activities but tend not to pursue interests outside school in any systematic way. Some rural children are excluded from involvement in school activities because of the long distances they must travel by bus. This can be anywhere from one-half to three hours per day. Even though some students only travel a short distance, the times that buses arrive and leave will coordinate with the beginning and end of class times leaving no opportunity for extracurricular involvement. Children from Indian reservations, without exception, are excluded from school activities in this way.

Other children who do not take advantage of school activities are from the New Canadians group. Many of these children are under extreme pressure to keep up with their daily school and home work. It is not unusual for them to put in 16-hour days, working first at overcoming language barriers to learning and then trying to apply what they have learned to course requirements. A further difficulty for these youngsters is the amount of time they must put in to help support the family or help run the family business. The money they earn frequently goes toward bringing relatives out from their countries of origin. Some new Canadian children labour under the extra pressure of having to do well in school. Their families are working hard to save enough money to put them through university so that they in turn can support the younger siblings expected to follow them. These expectations are givens. The children are not consulted on whether or not they want to pursue higher learning. Frequently their parents have little or no idea of the nature and requirements of school learning and the academic expectations with which their children are trying to cope. Schools with substantial numbers of immigrant children may provide a needed support service to these children by arranging meetings between their parents and school counselling personnel to discuss, through an interpreter, their children's educational needs and concerns.

In sum, many children are involved in both school and non- school based extracurricular activities. These interests compete heavily with schooling. Further, what is learned and considered valuable by partaking in them is perceived to have little bearing on school-related learning. In fact, most students tend to see schooling as insular and as generally discontinuous with their wider family and social lives, as well as with their preferred activities.

A third factor that competes, and sometimes interferes with schooling, is working to earn spending money. This involves doing assigned household chores for an allowance and pursuing a variety of other paid jobs. Very few students interviewed actually relied upon their allowance to provide them with enough money. Younger students have babysitting jobs, deliver papers, collect bottles, papers and cans for recycling, cut lawns or do odd jobs around the neighbourhood. Older students do the same, but many more secondary students have regular part-time work, or in some cases, full-time evening and weekend jobs. Most students work full- or part-time during the summer months as well. In addition to paid work, about one-third of the students do volunteer work in hospitals, senior citizens homes, and for elderly neighbours and relatives. Church involvement plays a large part in their voluntary activities as well. They attend regularly, teach Sunday school or catechism classes, canvass, help with fund-raising and organize youth group events.

From the foregoing it is clear that children lead very busy lives. During our interviews with them, we noted that they talk about extracurricular and non-school based activities and pursuits with an enthusiasm and interest that is notably lacking from their discussions of schooling and the day-to- day business of doing school work. A singular exception to this state of affairs became evident when students were asked to tell us about what helps them to learn. They spoke with interest and clarity about they way they learn and about what teachers can do to optimize classroom learning.

As is evident from our report, much of what children have to say about themselves is consistent with information submitted to the Royal Commission on Education in briefs presented by teachers, parents, practitioners, trustees and members of the general public.

5. Educational Issues

The Learners

In the first section of this report, we have described the learners of British Columbia. They are a diverse and interesting group of young people, reflecting an almost unlimited range of backgrounds and experiences. With over half a million in the schools of the province, they constitute a large and challenging group. It would perhaps have been comfortable to have been able to document an idyllic and safe childhood for all of the next generation of adults. But the image of a carefree childhood as a time of seemingly endless days of fun for all children, as a time free of worry and anxiety, is simply a myth. While the image of a carefree childhood might be true for some, for many childhood is a tough time, perhaps not without pleasures and accomplishments, but most definitely not a storybook experience.

We started the first section with an account of what the written submissions to the Commission had to say about learners. These accounts were primarily oriented toward the experiences of children and adolescents in school. After all, this is a Royal Commission on Education, and it is understandable that most writers would focus on children in school—the place where most people expect to obtain an education. What we were told in these submissions was similar to the findings reported in *Let's Talk About Schools*. British Columbians expect their schools to be oriented toward education. They want their children to leave their school years with a solid foundation of intellectual capabilities, prepared with the understandings and dispositions required for the world of adulthood and the world of work. School should be a place where individual differences are addressed, but primarily it is seen as a route to provide children with a basic education. While schools should be safe and supportive places, they quite clearly have a serious and important role to play in the development of the young.

We followed that chapter with a descriptive account of some important statistical information about learners and schools. While the information included in Chapter 2 does not reflect an exhaustive rendition of schools and their clients, it presents an overview of some of the critical variables that influence the way schools operate and the lives of children in those schools. Our goal was not to produce a textbook about children and schools, rather it was to provide a summary of some of the notable issues so that the reader could have a sense of the larger picture—a statistical abstraction if you will.

We were dissatisfied with the kind of statistical profile of learners that we were able to portray with data drawn from archival sources. To us these data were important, but they did not provide us with a sense of the daily lives of British Columbia's children. Although we had little reason to believe that the statistical data were untruthful, they did not paint the kind of vivid picture that we felt was necessary in order to guarantee that learners were to be at the centre of the Commission's deliberations and recommendations. We were also guided strongly by critiques by Donald Cochrane and his colleagues (Cochrane, 1987) of the recent curriculum review in Saskatchewan. In these critiques, it was argued that although data and research findings from other provinces and countries were relevant to policy debates in Saskatchewan, it was mandatory that researchers ground their recommendations in the contextually defined realities of their own learners.

We took this advice seriously and decided to conduct our own empirical research with British Columbia's students. However, rather than start with the premise that our job was to study schools and how learners adjust to them, we wanted to study learners and the meaning of their educational and school experiences from their personal points of view. Thus, we interviewed 63 learners in Grades 3 to 12, in both public and independent schools, from various ethnic groups and enjoying different levels of educational advantage, and living in urban and rural settings throughout the province. We also interviewed their parents, or an adult who was responsible for the learner. Our interviews were simple. "What is your life like?" we asked. "Describe your days." "Who are your friends?" "What are they like?" "What do you do on the weekends?" "In the summer?" "What helps you learn?" These interviews, which were actually more like conversations, provided us with a graphic understanding not only about the meaning of schooling for these learners,

but also in a deeper sense what life was like for them. Our belief is that school and the education that it provides exist for learners; learners are not merely fuel to keep the bureaucracy going. Chapter 3 reports profiles of the lives of these 63 young British Columbians.

In Chapter 4 we discussed some of the prominent developmental and educational themes that we think derive from these interviews. It was interesting but not particularly startling to us that in general these learners approached school with a utilitarian perspective. Their goals for schooling were tied more to what benefits they could gain from the process than to a desire to learn for its own sake. Yet somehow paradoxically, the young people we interviewed held both personal and social views of their own learning. While for them learning was an intensely personal activity that, when done right, provoked the imagination and kindled a challenging spirit, it was also a group activity, one to be shared with friends and classmates. Once more, they valued teachers who provided them with opportunities to take risks and strive for more than they thought they could achieve, but somehow also were able to create that sense of belonging to a group that provides colleagues to share in the challenge.

What was perhaps more troubling was that a number of these youngsters had no goals for themselves. This was true more for the children of disadvantaged than advantaged backgrounds. Life for them was characterized more as an unfolding of events, a string of experiences, than it was a journey toward a distant but somehow partially visualized destination. Particularly for Native youth, the school seemed to hold little of value. As well, for those Native youth who had a goal in life, they seemed to have little idea of how to achieve it. Beyond a doubt our schools serve this group of Native people very poorly.

Most of the children in our interviews, even those with somewhat clear goals for themselves, had only a vague sense of how one goes about achieving one's goals. Similarly, from our parents interviews, we found that many parents had little information about the possible career paths that could be open to their children. We are convinced that one of the valuable roles that schools could play in educating both learners and parents about careers and alternative futures for students' lives is not fulfilled adequately. What efforts schools do exert in this direction occur too late in the student's school career and most often do not involve parents. In a similar vein, at the secondary level the curriculum is startlingly inadequate for those learners who are not planning to attend a post-secondary educational institution. What most of the secondary students in our interviews requested, even those headed to college or university, was more variety and more choice.

The Issues

We move now to a discussion of issues in the lives of learners, particularly those that interact with education and schooling. Section II of this report has, besides this one, four chapters. In our estimation, each concerns a major area of concern for learners in school.

Chapter 6 is entitled *Clarifying the Vision: The Goals of Education*. In this chapter we clarify what we believe to be the goals of education and the functions of schooling. Education and schooling are not identical concepts. Education is both a process and a state. It is a process in the sense that educated people possess the capability to learn by themselves. It is a state in the sense that educated people possess knowledge and understanding about the world and humanity. We articulate four goals of education: cultivation of mind; preparation for economic participation and vocational development; the development of moral responsibility; and the development of the person as an individual. Schooling is a social enterprise that has taken on many functions, indeed far more than it is capable of achieving successfully. While there are currently in British Columbia, as elsewhere, many functions of schooling, we believe that there are three functions that are necessary for the British Columbia school system to fulfill: provide the foundations of an education upon which people can build a lifetime of learning; socialization of children to the norms and values of their society; and custodial care of children and youth.

In Chapter 7 we discuss the rights and responsibilities of the learners in British Columbia's schools. We begin the chapter with a discussion of the legal basis of the rights of learners. Since the passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, there has been a new interest in judicial definitions of the rights of people occupying all sorts of social roles, including the rights of learners. While there is no doubt that at some time the courts will get into the business of interpreting

student rights, we do not at this time place heavy emphasis on litigation as a mechanism to resolve issues of student rights. Rather, we prefer educational solutions to this issues, preferably through mechanisms available through legislation.

In our discussion of responsibilities, we highlight the conundrum in which schools are caught. For some parents and students, schools are too lax in their enforcement of rules that dictate to learners their responsibilities toward the school, teachers, peers, and themselves. For others, schools are seen as dictatorial, imposing arbitrary rules on powerless, but sometimes resisting children. The school must navigate the difficult waters between these two views of learners' responsibilities. The danger is that in efforts to avoid the shoals in these treacherous waters, the schools become havens of arbitrary relativism.

We discuss the nature of learning and teaching in Chapter 8. People learn by trying to make sense of the world. Our view of learning is that it is an act of constructing understanding. It is not an act of merely receiving knowledge that has been created by someone else. Learning is accomplished by relating what is to be learned to what is already known. What is important to recognize is that not only facts and information must be learned; procedures must also be learned for doing something with that information. Learning requires activity; for learning to be effective, students must do something. In the same vein, motivation is a quality that is related to learning. It is not a magical possession that some learners have and some do not have. Students learn to be motivated to work at tasks in school, thus motivation is something that teachers can take some responsibility for as they teach their students.

Woven into our treatment of learning and motivation is a discussion of teaching and of some of the characteristics and programs of schools that foster or hinder learning. We do not advocate a particular teaching method or set of methods. Instead we point out that teaching should be a creative, professional enterprise. Teachers have unique knowledge, skills, and dispositions that some researchers have called the "culture of teaching." In our view, effective teaching is based on the principles of learning and motivation that we describe. But because teaching can never be based on formula responses to what are fundamentally complex and ambiguous situations, it is impossible to dictate to teachers how they should teach in all situations. We provide several examples of some of the contradictions that seem to plague educational jurisdictions everywhere as policy makers attempt to modify and improve the effectiveness of schools.

The ninth chapter of this report concerns questions of standards and expectations of performance of learners and the school system. Standards are something that everyone seems to talk about, but everyone seems to have different definitions of the terms that they use. We discuss the difficulty of coming to a shared meaning of the concepts associated with the standards that we would like our schools to achieve. In this chapter we also are concerned with the tensions that surround concerns for equity and excellence. While it seems that most British Columbians share a desire for an open and equitable school system, there is less agreement about how that objective should be reached and what costs we are willing to pay to get there. Finally, we discuss some of the programs currently used in British Columbia to assess the extent to which our schools achieve publicly acceptable standards of performance. As part of this discussion, we demonstrate some of the contradictions and shortcomings of these and, indeed, most efforts to evaluate schools.

Throughout the chapters in this section of the report, we return time and again to a number of central questions in education. While the following list does not reflect all of these questions, they provide a sense of some of these issues.

What role should schools play in the provision of comprehensive social services to children and youth?

What are we to do about the tension between the needs for uniform treatment of all children and the desire of many for as much choice as possible from among a variety of alternatives?

How do we resolve the potential conflict between the demands of families and the requirements of schools?

How do we create policies regarding choice so that the interests of children are protected independently from the interests of parents, particularly when parent and child are in conflict?

What policies should we adopt concerning the need for a common, basic education for all and the desire and need for specialized curricula, particularly at the secondary level?

How do we treat individual differences among learners?

How do we provide quality educational experiences to all the children who possess the full range of talents and abilities for learning from school?

6. Clarifying the Vision: The Goals of Education

Like citizens in most of the western democracies, Canadians ask their educational institutions to accomplish an enormous range of tasks. This pressure to take on many social purposes is probably built into the social fabric of democracies, where each special interest group attempts to persuade policy makers that their wishes ought to be heeded. It is, of course, one of the hallmarks of open democratic societies that the debate about the purposes of social institutions takes on this flavour. When a society is relatively homogeneous—when the population shares a common culture with shared values and mores—the debate about the goals and functions of its institutions usually focusses on a narrow range of issues. It is more difficult to understand the debate, however, when a society becomes more and more diverse.

Diversity is probably one of the more fractious developments in British Columbia today. Since the last Royal Commission on education 28 years ago, the composition of the social fabric has changed noticeably. The technical report on *British Columbia Schools and Society* documents this general change and in the earlier sections of this report we demonstrated the change in the learners of British Columbia. It is most likely that this increasing diversity will continue into the 21st century, as interprovincial and international migration continues to shape the population of the Province. Because immigration and the movement of Canadian citizens from province to province are not matters which are directly in the control of provincial governments, it is unlikely that British Columbia will have much of an opportunity to control the trend toward increasing diversity. Thus, it is likely that politicians and policy makers of every stripe will have to concern themselves with nature of a diverse social system and the special interests that such a system produces.

Diversity in British Columbia is often characterized by the cultural and ethnic groups which make up the population of the province. With the dozens of countries of origin and myriad languages that are represented in the province, it is not surprising that ethnicity is perhaps the most obvious signal of diversity. But there are other ways of characterizing the diversity among British Columbians. There are obvious differences in where people live—in the north or south, interior or coast, in cities, towns, farms and bush. There are differences in the wealth of the population, from the super rich to the most impoverished. The people of British Columbia practice a large array of religions based on many different values and beliefs. There are almost unlimited opportunities for people to develop unique lifestyles and there is much evidence that British Columbians today take advantage of these opportunities. Even in such traditional areas as the nature of the family, there are today many variations in structure and styles of interaction that were virtually unheard of decades earlier. Finally, as the economy of British Columbia has become more diversified, the ways in which the people of the province earn their livings have changed.

All of this diversity brings with it problems. One of these problems is that, compared with more homogeneous societies, there is much less shared meaning among citizens. Disputes abound, and with less shared understanding and values there is less common ground on which to base resolution of these disputes. Controversy, it seems, surrounds even the most prosaic of decisions and nothing in the public sphere is decided without its fair share of acrimony. But everyone has learned the time honoured method of influencing policy—make sure that your voice is heard. British Columbians today have learned that in order to influence decision makers you have to influence the public. There are only a few lessons to be learned about how to do this. First, find someone like you who has the same (or a similar) policy objective. Second, form a group and name it. Third, contact the media and talk with decision makers.

With regard to educational policy, many, many groups have learned these lessons well. There is no shortage of opinion about what ought to happen in the educational system of British Columbia. Nor is there a shortage of publicly voiced expression of this opinion. Indeed, there has been so much influence by one or another special interest group on the nature of education in the province that as a society we seem to have lost a sense of direction and purpose for our schools. As a result, one of the most frequently heard calls in the public hearings and the written submissions to the Commission has been "Define the mandate of education in British Columbia." When we pursued the meaning of this request further, what we usually heard was "Tell me what the schools should do and what they should not do." A similar response was "Tell me what the schools are responsible for and what they are not responsible for." What has been clear

is that many people believe that the schools are asked to do too much. They have taken the responsibility for far too many goals as they step into the gaps left by increasing diversity and rapid change.

The debate over the goals of education and the way in which these goals are pursued in schools is appropriate and ought to be expected. The educational system should reflect the collective wishes of the society. What is at issue here is not that the debate should occur or even what the resolution of these issues ought to be. Rather, what we have observed is that the debate has been ill organized and that many aspects of educational change (e.g., the addition of specialized content into the curriculum, such as consumer education and more recently, family life education) has not been subject to proper dialogue. What we need in the Province is a more systematic mechanism for the public airing of the goals of education and the means by which the school systems of the province design and implement programs to reach these goals.

Tensions over the Goals of Education

What, then, are some of the goals of education that are recommended by the diverse elements of British Columbian society? Our analysis of the submissions to the Royal Commission (see Chapter 1) includes over 500 references to the goals of education. Many of these references concern particular curriculum additions which are more properly considered means by which goals are achieved. However, by inference it is possible to represent the goals to which such curriculum additions are aimed. Interestingly, these goals are very similar in scope and relative importance to the goals of education discussed in *Let's Talk About Schools*.

The most frequently mentioned goal concerns academic achievement, such as learning to learn, communication skills, thinking, problem solving and developing research skills. These goals are followed in frequency by vocational, career, and employment related goals. Third in order of frequency are social and human goals, which include the teaching of religion (often, but not always the teaching of Christianity), world understanding, family-life education, and the duties and obligations of young people to society (often in contrast to their rights). In addition to these goals, a number of others were suggested. Some referred to specific content in support of one or more of the more general goals (such as stressing science, requiring technology and computer education, and emphasizing second language learning). Others were related to one of the general goals above, but clearly concerned a particular social cause. These included reference to environmental education, the role and rights of women, and Canadian studies.

Strong arguments have been presented in the briefs and at public hearings held by the Commission in support of these and other goals. Our problem is not deciding whether one or another of the more specialized or narrowly defined goals is important in its own right. All are important. The problem is to decide which are relatively more or less important to be included in the limited time and resources that are available in school. Everything that is suggested by committed and dedicated people to be included in the mandate of schools cannot gain entry to the list of goals. There are simply not enough resources nor will there ever be enough time. Thus, difficult and sometimes divisive decisions must be made.

The children and youth of British Columbia are best served by a more narrow definition of the goals of education than is implied by the long list of goals suggested above. The school, after all, is but one of many social institutions that share the responsibility for the development of the young. Given that schools will always have restricted access to resources, schools will always have to select from among the many proposed goals only those which are most appropriate and are likely to be accomplished. This is not to say that many of the other purposes that people and groups suggest for schools are not important. Indeed they might be critically important for the development of the young. They might even be necessary for children to be able to succeed at school. But from the point of view of the school the acid test must be...Are they appropriate for the school to accomplish?

We take a narrow approach to defining the goals of education because we feel that a more inclusive set of goals destroys the meaning of a school system. If a school system, including both public and independent sectors, is asked to accomplish all of the objectives in the development of the young, then it will have to reconstitute all of the social institutions, both formal and informal, that contribute to this development. Once the school system embarks upon the path of inclusivity, of attempting to accomplish all of the developmental goals of children, there is no way of deciding

which are more appropriate than others. If we use the general heuristic that anything that influences the child's ability to profit from schooling should be included in the goals of schools, then we are lost, for the literature indicates that just about anything of any importance in childhood has some influence on the success of children in school.

We *must* limit the scope of what we expect from schools and refocus our attention, where needed, on those social institutions that ought to be responsible for other goals. This is very difficult to do because of one very compelling reason. *Public schools are the only formally constituted social agency that is required by law to deliver services to all children of the appropriate age who request the service.* Public schools cannot turn anyone away. Moreover, once they are there, the pupils in schools constitute a captive population. When a child is troubled, if the child cannot benefit from what the school has to offer, then that child's teachers and classmates must live with those problems. The child will not go away! This state of affairs is different from all other agencies that deliver social services. In addition to this, teachers and other school officials tend to be the type of people who want to help people who are troubled or in distress. Indeed, much is said in the selection of prospective teachers that they ought to be caring and supportive people.

These two features of schools, when put together, help to explain why it seems like schools are so willing to take on so much. For some children schools are the only stable force in their lives, and because teachers are often so committed to the improvement of the lives of children, we find that schools attempt to supply what Coleman (1988) calls "social capital." Social capital is all of those benefits and resources that, when present, allow children to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. Social capital is not only what the nuclear family can provide for children, but includes those resource available in the extended family, neighbourhood and community.

Children who have limited access to social capital have a difficult time succeeding at school. The literature on poverty and educational disadvantage is replete with documentation of these difficulties. Teachers know the consequences of the absence of social capital from their reading of the literature and from their daily experiences in school with these children. And teachers know that the only access to social capital for many children is through the school. Recent developments in British Columbia bear witness to these observations, as increasingly the school system attempts to provide resources such as meals, family counselling, and mental health services. Indeed, as we have shown in our analysis of the written submissions, the public is concerned about the provision of these services and resources. Many people support efforts to provide these services, others do not. Thus, over the last few decades schools have attempted to provide youngsters with whatever they did not have but needed to have to succeed at school. These attempts have brought us to the situation that we have encountered often in the public hearings and written submissions, and to which we refer above: The people of British Columbia want to revisit the mandate of their school systems.

In our meetings with representatives of government agencies and non-profit groups which provide non-educational services for children, we often were told that the schools do a remarkable job trying to provide extensive support services for youngsters. We also determined that in their efforts to provide these services, educators were creating an unanticipated problem. What we frequently heard was that if a child had a very serious problem that fell clearly within the mandate of one or another service agency (e.g., the Ministry of Social Services and Housing), then that child's problem would be addressed. But many of these agencies defined their own mandates in such a way that only extremely pressing problems or problems which were described very narrowly were addressed. Marginal cases often fell between the cracks in the mandates of these agencies. After all, we were told, virtually all children go to school and the schools can provide basic services such as counselling, speech and language therapy, mental health services and even in some jurisdictions social workers to find foster care placements. What we believe has happened is that many of these agencies, all of which suffer their own severe resource limitations, have defined their mandate in a manner that requires the schools to take on more responsibilities *because the schools have already expressed their willingness to do this extra work.* The schools have created their own demand by operating a supply side economy in these services.

It is not entirely clear that the school's willingness to address the full range of problems that children might encounter has provided the most optimum level of service. Programs offered by schools are developed, delivered, and supervised by educators. This is not a very revealing statement, but this fact is often overlooked by many who want schools to be more than they are or can be. There are serious limitations to the ability of the school system to properly provide specialized services for many of the problems that they might wish to address. There are a number of limitations to the ability of schools to address the full range of problems that confront children. First, using education dollars to provide extensive ancillary services creates a potential (and often realized) drain on scarce resources intended for the education of children. Second, educators do not have the proper training to develop and implement many programs that

are required to alleviate a number of these problems. Third, properly trained senior professionals are not available in school systems to supervise many specialized services.

So we are left with a compounded problem. On the one hand schools have agreed to provide a far wider range of services than they are traditionally expected to supply. On the other hand, the general quality of that service is not guaranteed, largely because of the inability of the schools to develop and supervise highly specialized services. The result of all of this is that as a society we might think that we have responded to many children's needs, when we might well not have.

We are not blaming anyone for this state of affairs. It is perhaps an inevitable result of the forces that have been at work in the province and in its social and educational service systems. The professional workers in all of these institutions and agencies appear to be dedicated and hard working people who hold the best interests of their publics in trust. Yet it is our opinion that the needs of the children of the province, particularly the developmental needs of youngsters facing moderate to severe problems, are not adequately addressed.

We believe that the first social institution that has responsibility for the developmental tasks of children is the family. Our efforts to ameliorate the problems children face should be based on this assumption. We also believe that solutions to problems are more effectively administered close to the problem, not in a distant government office. Basing the design of programs on these assumptions should help to reduce the potential that always exists of the state usurping the duties and obligations of the family and the community.

The logjam in the availability of social and educational services to children with special needs, either chronic or acute, is not unique to British Columbia. These problems are facing jurisdictions throughout North America. A number of different options have been considered in order to solve these problems. One which has been considered elsewhere but will most certainly not help in British Columbia is to create a Ministry of Children and Youth, or some other centralized bureaucracy. Such a mechanism will only serve to create more "mandates" for service which will merely extend the factionalized service system that we currently have. What is probably more useful is to create more opportunities and requirements for local communication among representatives of various services to ensure that local needs are being addressed. Currently the Interministerial Children's Committees attempt to fulfill this function in some areas of the province. One of the major limitations of these committees is that they have neither a budget to pay for services nor binding authority to act, and as a result their decisions and recommendations about some cases do not produce action. As well, there are no formalized mechanisms for the resolution of disputes when children or their families feel that adequate services have not been provided or that a particular decision was unjust. These problems should be addressed by the provision of an Ombudsman for Children who has the authority to require agencies to provide services where and when they are needed.

Our position, then, is that the schools be provided with a mandate that more narrowly defines what they ought to try to accomplish. Is saying this, we are fully aware of the need to provide services for the complete range of problems that confront the children of British Columbia. Although the terms of reference of this Royal Commission directed us to study the educational system of the province, by necessity we have had to turn our attention to these wider ranging social service questions, for a failure to address these other issues could render our educational recommendations meaningless. Thus, a narrow mandate for the schools necessitates broader mandates for other agencies, for the ability of the school system to achieve its mandate will depend on the extent to which all of the developmental needs of children are addressed in a concerted manner. We cannot afford as a society to allow children to be robbed of the opportunity to develop as fully capable adults. Nor can we as a society turn our backs on our moral responsibilities to provide these opportunities. However, as educational institutions schools cannot be held responsible for all of the experiences that are required for children to grow into fully capable adults. This task requires a sharing of responsibilities among many actors, including individual children, families, communities, businesses and governments.

We are not in a position to recommend a specific model of service delivery, although some very promising approaches have been suggested to the Commission. We believe that the choice of service models should result from discussions held among all of the agencies responsible for children's services. Nor do we believe that one particular model should be adopted for the entire province. In this matter, we think that diversity is superior to uniformity. The school is a site where virtually all children spend 5 or 6 hours a day. Thus, we believe that the school is a natural choice as the site

where integrated services might be performed. But it should be quite clear that we think that many of these services need to be provided and funded by agencies other than the schools.

To this point, we have addressed this discussion to special services that are not primarily instructional. But the goals of schools have expanded in other ways that are somewhat more difficult to detect, because these expansions seem to fit into the curricular functions of the school. As our society has become more diverse and as traditional social institutions like the neighbourhood and family change, there has been a tendency for the curriculum of the school to grow.

Consumer education is a good example of the expansion of the curriculum. The topics included in this mandatory high school course would have been considered the purview of the family years ago. Understanding banking and personal finance, spending habits and lifestyle, and domestic laws and contracts were all considered to be information that would acquired in the family as a natural part of growing up. This content is now in the school. It very well might be appropriate to have it there, but it is an addition to an already crowded agenda, nonetheless.

Other examples are easy to find in the school curriculum. Often these additions are the result of a pressing social, economic or political concern that one or another special interest group would like to see included in the curriculum. Often the concern is in reaction to a perceived lack in some other social institution that should be accommodated in the school, because the school is where the children are. Often the reasoning for including such courses in school is based on the premise that the content is crucial for children to know, and that the school is the only place where there is a reasonable guarantee that all children will be exposed to the content. These topics range from subjects such as environmental education, peace studies, and entrepreneurial studies to family life education, AIDS education, and intercultural communication.

Over the time that these and many other new topics have been added to the curriculum, the length of the school day and the school year have not changed. Children are not spending more time in school in order to learn this expanded list of subjects. It is not a terribly difficult act of reasoning to anticipate what the effects of these additions to the curriculum might be. If more content is added to the school's agenda and more time is not made available to study that content, then there must be less time devoted to subjects that were already in the curriculum. This is an inescapable conclusion and, in fact, is what has happened over the last decade or so.

We are not arguing here for a lengthening of the time devoted to school. As we have shown in earlier sections, the children of British Columbia are busy people. Much of what they do outside of school contributes importantly to their growth and educational development, as well as contributing in many cases to the standard of living of themselves and their families. As well, in many cases their volunteer activities contribute to the material and spiritual standards of their communities. Requiring children to spend more time in school is not likely to solve the problem that we are outlining here. What is necessary is a reassessment of what we are trying to accomplish with the school curriculum and an affirmation of what ought to be the core of that curriculum. This assessment and affirmation requires clarity about the goals of education, to which we now turn.

Toward a Limited Set of Educational Goals

First, the most traditional goal of education, one that has been embraced by societies since educational systems were created as separate social institutions, is the cultivation of mind. Second, and close on the heels of the first, is the goal that is the result of the industrial revolution: preparation for economic participation and vocational development. Third, an enduring goal of education has been and continues to be the development of morally responsible adults. This third goal is closely related to issues concerning the maintenance of the social order through the development of responsible participants in civic and social institutions. Finally, a goal of education that is more a product of twentieth century thought is the development of the person as an individual. Here we refer to the emphasis on the development of the person in the social context.

Education and schooling

Before we proceed to a discussion of these four educational goals, it is important that we distinguish between education and schooling. Schooling serves three functions. The first is to provide the foundations of an education upon which people can build a lifetime of learning. Second, schooling serves to help socialize children and adolescents to the norms and values of their society. Third, schools provide a custodial function; they are places where children can spend time in relative safety and under the care of adults while the adults in their families work.

Education is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge about self and the world. It is worthwhile in its own right because education has its own intrinsic worth; it is better to be well educated than to be poorly educated. A good education provides a person with access to the accumulated cultural wealth of civilization. The educated person belongs to a community that extends beyond the confines of time and space of any individual's life. For such people, their true neighbourhood is the world and their era is the history of humanity. Their spirituality can embrace the religions of the world and their literature can extend beyond their own language.

As well as its own intrinsic worth, education has instrumental value. It is part of North American folklore that a person can turn a good education into more earning power. But beyond the folklore, there is substantial research to support this claim. The rationale for the utility of an education is that the educated person is more capable of flexible thinking and creative problem solving, therefore in possession of qualities that are rewarded in the competitive marketplace. It is also true that as North American society has become more credential conscious, employers require more and more formal education for higher paying jobs. Teaching is a good example. The movement of teacher training from the normal school to the university has been associated with increases in teacher salaries. Even now in British Columbia teachers' salaries are closely tied to the number of years of postsecondary education that the teacher possesses. Of course, the argument for this relationship is that more years of formal education are indeed important for the execution of the tasks associated with the jobs that require this education.

Education, then, is both a process and a state. It is a process in the sense that the educated person possesses the capability to learn independently. It is a state in the sense that the person possesses knowledge and understanding about the world and humanity. But it is also a commodity that can be traded for rewards in the marketplace.

How does school fit into the definition of education? Schooling is not the same as education. To be sure, one of the functions of schools is to provide the province's youth with an education. But that is only one of the functions of schooling. Schools are also responsible for taking care of children during the day while their parents are working. Much has been written about the changing nature of the family and how these changes have influenced schools. With well over half of the mothers of school age children in the workforce, it is clear that the custodial functions that schools are currently serving and will continue to serve constitute an important social service. These custodial functions cannot be minimized.

Schools also serve a socializing function. While the first agency of socialization is and ought to be the family, the school helps socialize children to a wider community than the family. In school, children are exposed to a potentially wider set of values and norms than exist in the family. There are also simply more people around in school than in the home, and working and playing in groups of 25 or so requires attitudes and abilities that are not necessary in the home. As Ronald Marx and John Walsh have argued recently in the *Elementary School Journal*, (Marx & Walsh, 1988) schooling is a social enterprise, not an individualistic one. This causes one of the great paradoxes of schooling and education, for learning, which is the work of school, occurs within the individual. At the same time the class is a social entity and the tasks which constitute the events in this workplace are socially constructed tasks. They have meaning for the participants only within the social system of the school. This is true of tasks which are obviously social, such as group activities, as well as tasks which seem to be individualistic, such as completing the ubiquitous worksheets in class.

The 63 young people we interviewed for the Commission clearly understood the socializing functions of schools. Indeed, for them the most important agenda of the school was the socialization agenda. For many of them, the educational agenda was merely a setting in which the truly important work of school took place. But rarely in schools is the socialization function explicitly addressed. It is still the hidden curriculum.

Notwithstanding these other functions of school, it is clear that schools are first and foremost *educational* institutions. It is necessary, however, to be more specific about these educational functions, for they are often only partially understood. Schools can provide only the basic tools which, when learned well in school, allow people to continue to learn throughout their lives. Indeed, the best schooling is only a beginning of the lifelong process of education. Many other formal and informal activities contribute to a person's educational development, and not all of these take place in schools. Thus, while schools provide the foundations for educational development, they are only one institution that contributes to this development and, indeed, K-12 schooling does so for only about 2% to 3% of the total hours in the lives of the average person born today.

It is interesting that adults' participation in continuing education is highly related to the amount of schooling they received earlier in their lives. Ledgerwood, in a report prepared for the Commission, has shown that more highly educated adults are more often found in formal adult education programs than less highly educated adults. The statistics are startling. For example, in 1983 over 40% of the university graduates in British Columbia took an adult education course, while the comparable figure for adults with less than a grade nine education was 5%. This relationship is quite linear, with 18% of the high school graduates and 30% of the adults with some post-secondary education taking adult education courses. These figures are for those adults who participated in *formal* adult education classes. It is likely that statistics for nonformal adult education activities are similar.

Schools, then, are responsible for three very important functions. They provide the foundations for an education which, if done well, prepares young people for a lifetime of learning. Schools contribute to the socialization of children, teaching them to live, work, and play in a community. Finally, schools supply custodial services to children and their families, providing a safe and supportive environment for children for 13 years.

The cultivation of mind

We return now to the four goals of education that we introduced earlier. We believe that the primary purpose of education is the cultivation of the mind and the primary purpose of schooling is education. This purpose was expressed clearly in the brief submitted by the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. In their brief, these educators state that

> *education is concerned with the development of the mind, and that in seeking to educate we are aiming to bring our children up to have critical, autonomous and inquiring minds, such that they may prove better able to function within and contribute to our democratic society, while fully developing their own potential.*

This definition would probably receive very little dissent. Few people would argue that these products of an education are not worthwhile and central to the ideals of citizenship in a democratic society. But what is contentious is how does a school system provide the experiences that lead to these qualities?

Two issues need to be addressed in order to answer this question. First, what ought to be taught as the program of schools? To use the words of the education professors at Simon Fraser University, *What is worth knowing?* Our answer to this question is traditional. Everyone should know something about mathematics, science, history and government, and artistic endeavours (including literature, visual, and performing arts). We assert this without equivocation. Furthermore, we want to underscore the importance of the word *everyone* in our assertion. The only exceptions to this statement are severely mentally handicapped people who are capable only of learning the most simple personal care skills. The development of understanding about these four core subjects constitutes the minimum content for a basic education.

Much has been written recently in the education and psychology literature about learning higher order mental abilities. As well, in many of the submissions to the Commission, people argue that schools should be concerned with teaching young people how to learn as much as teaching them the content that they need to learn. The focus of these concerns is on the ability of children to think critically and with flexibility, which are among the hallmarks of education. These concerns stem from the perception held by many that children are not learning how to do these sophisticated mental acts and that schools have the responsibility to teach children how to do them. Often what is done is to treat these

abilities as skills, discrete activities that can be used with a range of content. As the argument is often framed, if children can learn how to think strategically, they will be able to apply these skills of thinking to any subject matter that they need to learn. In other words, transfer of learning will be enhanced through the development of these thinking skills. Many programs are available to teach generic thinking skills as separate content in the curriculum. Indeed, in our visits to schools as part of our research, we visited one school where one half-hour a day in each class was devoted to a thinking skills program.

It is undeniable that children have to learn how to think at advanced levels. To teach children only facts without at the same time teaching them how to reason about those facts and to make critical judgments about the world is to deny them the essence of quality education. Nonetheless, there is a significant problem with many, but not all, thinking skills programs. The problem is that it is impossible to think generically without thinking about something. Research on the psychology of thinking and learning over the last two decades has clearly shown that declarative knowledge (knowing *that*) and procedural knowledge (knowing *how*) are closely related. The development of expertise in an area requires both of these types of knowledge and, while there are some generalizable features of procedural knowledge, it is impossible to teach people how to think in the absence of something to think about. With reference to the goals of education, it is senseless to talk about higher order thinking goals independent of the subject matter that one wishes to teach. Put differently, the first question is to determine what is worth learning, and then to decide the nature of the learning that is required in order to think in a sophisticated manner about that subject. Goals of education that are couched *only* in terms of skills (such as communication skills or interpersonal skills) are not sensible.

The second consideration regarding how to reach the qualities of education described by the Simon Fraser University professors of education concerns instructional matters. It is insufficient to discuss only the content of the school program. Indeed, much of the criticism of schools, whether warranted or not, is of the way in which the subjects are taught as much as what the subjects are. Although a detailed discussion of learning and teaching can be found in a later chapter of this report, it is important to note here that the extent to which students can develop a high degree of sophisticated learning in school is related to the way in which they are taught. The most worthy subjects taught in a rote and insensitive manner will not lead to the kind of education that we envisage here. What is necessary is a thorough treatment of the curriculum in a manner that fosters higher order thinking. This requires appropriate sequencing of topics in the curriculum, attention to the way in which learners think about what they are studying, and deliberate teaching of the strategies that learners can use to think more deeply. Sequencing in this sense is not necessarily based on the dictum that curriculum should move from the simple to the complex. This dictum has far too often resulted in a curriculum that is predigested for learners. Rather, curriculum should be sequenced on the basis of the nature of the discipline that is under study and knowledge about how students think about the subject matter. It should be clear that our conception of curriculum and instruction places great demands on teachers, for they must be knowledgeable about the content they are teaching and proficient at the ways in which to teach learners how to think about that content.

Preparation for economic participation

Close on the heels of the development of mind as an educational goal is preparation for participation in the economic system. Both in *Let's Talk About Schools* and in our analysis of the submissions to the Commission, vocational development receives considerable attention. We believe that vocational development must be an important educational goal. Vocational development, however, suffers the same problems as does intellectual development. First, what is important to teach about vocational development and how should it be taught?

There is much difference of opinion about the role that schools should play in this area. This difference of opinion has lead to considerable confusion. The first confusion is based on the faulty assumption that there are two types of youth in school, academic students and career or vocational students. This is a confusion because we really ought to expect that all students in school are both academic and vocational students. They are academic because all require and deserve to benefit from the intellectual program of schools. All students need to develop their minds. They are all vocational students because all (at least for some time in their lives, and this time appears to be growing), are expected to participate in the economic community as wage earners. Our growing expectation is that all young people should be prepared for careers.

Young adults of today who are uninformed about the economic system in which they live and who do not possess the information and personal attributes necessary to achieve economic independence are inadequately educated. This is true of people who plan to attend university after secondary school just as much is it is true of people who plan to enter the work force directly. We believe that the major components of education for the world of work ought to be part of the common curriculum in which all students participate. Among these elements is information and understanding about how the world of work operates. Such information should include, for example, system or macro level content such as the structure of the economy, the nature of work in different sectors of the economy, relationships between the public and private sectors including how policy is established and implemented, and how power and influence are used in British Columbia and Canada. In addition to subject matter concerning how the economic system operates, students should know about careers and the relationship between education, training and employment. Indeed, one of the clear messages that we received through briefs and presentations at public hearings was that parents and students would like to have more attention devoted during secondary school to career counselling. In particular, requests often concerned informational as well as motivational aspects of career counselling. Generally, it was claimed that many students have difficulty selecting a career or post-secondary education because they are poorly informed about the options that are available to them. The third important element in this arena concerns the role that personal habits, work habits, and interests relate to the world of work.

Typically in schools around North America, most thought is directed toward the secondary school curriculum that is designed to prepare the graduate for university entrance. While there certainly are exceptions to this generalization, it is rare that the curriculum for non-university bound students is as coherent and articulated as the curriculum for the potential university student. In British Columbia a very small proportion of secondary school students actually enrol in a university program, while a large number select their secondary school courses on the basis of expecting to attend university. As one educator told us though, rarely do students and their parents actually choose vocational programs. Rather, vocational or career programs are chosen only after the student has been unsuccessful at the more academically oriented program.

One result of all of this is that vocational programs are perceived as lower in status. More intellectually capable students are directed toward academically oriented studies and less intellectually oriented students are directed toward vocational programs. In a bizarre twist on this process, educators responsible for some vocationally oriented post-secondary programs, in an attempt to increase their status and compete with "better students," have been raising the requirements for entry into their programs. Usually this means that they are requiring applicants to their programs to take secondary school courses that are the same as or similar to those required for university entrance. This policy will further serve to limit career access to students whose interests and abilities do not point them toward a university preparation curriculum.

It is inevitable that programs in schools that are explicitly vocationally oriented will suffer the status problems that they currently suffer. The social status accorded various occupations and professions is the result of many factors, only one of which is the status of different curriculum paths in school. It is equally likely that these status differences in school reflect patterns in society as much as they cause them. It is naive to think that the curriculum of schools will significantly alter widely held status perceptions. Nonetheless, there is a significant educational problem that results from these status differences. It is that by the junior secondary years many young people who are not university bound find themselves engaged in a mock curriculum, a curriculum that neither helps cultivate their minds nor prepares them adequately for a vocation. This curriculum fails to achieve the former goal because of its lowered expectations and inadequate coverage of important topics. It fails to achieve the second goal because it is neither comprehensive vocational preparation nor state-of-the-art job training.

What is required is, first, a common core curriculum designed to cultivate the minds of all students. This curriculum needs to be developed in association with instructional practices that will help achieve this goal. Instruction that we believe is necessary requires learners to be active and to create their own understandings with the help of their teachers and peers. It is not instruction based on passivity. Students need to engage in the hard work of learning, not merely listen to the result of the teacher's hard work. The elementary years should provide the basic capabilities in literacy and numeracy so that children can succeed at the common curriculum. The evidence that we have is that the current elementary school curriculum achieves this standard admirably, with one or two exceptions concerned mainly with learning disabled and other difficult-to-teach children. Second, the common curriculum should be required over the period currently devoted to the junior secondary years. All students should be required to take these courses in a non-

age-graded system. We believe that the rigid use of age-grading in schools constitutes a serious limitation to innovation and to opportunities for the individual development of learners. Upon successful completion of the common curriculum, students should select a specialized curriculum oriented toward the immediate post-secondary years. For some, this curriculum will be oriented toward further academic preparation at a college or university. The senior years of the current secondary system appear to be doing a very good job for these students. For some, the senior secondary years will be oriented toward specific vocational preparation. These courses of study will be developed and delivered collaboratively by schools, unions, and employers. Admission to either of the senior secondary programs should be based on successful completion of the common curriculum. It should not be based on grades or any other predetermined sorting mechanism.

The schools should not be in the business of training people for particular jobs. In a time when technological advance is radically restructuring the work place, we cannot afford the cost of implementing job training in the schools. The initial hardware and machinery costs would be prohibitive in any occupation that concerns primary production or manufacturing, and the cost of upgrading equipment that rapidly grows obsolete would increase these costs substantially. As well, as the Commissioner's Community Working Group on Business and Education has shown, service industries (defined in its broadest sense to include utilities, wholesale, retail, finance and other services) now employ about two-thirds of the British Columbian workforce (these figures are virtually identical to the statistics for all of Canada). Even in the service industries, high technology is the word of the day. As Quinn, Baruch and Paquette (1987) have shown recently in an article in *Scientific American*, technological development in the service sector of private industry will most likely fuel attempts by industrialized nations to regain their share of the manufacturing sector. Even by themselves, service "commodities" constitute an very important element in the productivity of post-industrial economies. These changes in the economy were impossible to forecast 25 years ago when many of the workers in these industries were in school. Obviously, schools were not the places where these workers received the training they needed for their jobs.

Morally responsible adults

The development of moral responsibility is an assignment given to a number of social institutions beside the school system, including the family and the church. Three issues are important in this arena. First, the diversity found in British Columbia today that was discussed earlier includes diversity in values. But because we live in a widely diverse society in which a number of difficult and wrenching moral questions face us daily, it does not mean that all moral questions are entirely relative. An understanding and appreciation of another person's culture and perspective does not require an abdication of the responsibility of making commitments to moral judgments. There are moral imperatives that are not dependent solely upon a person's cultural background. It is important that, through education, young people are shown that adults are able to reason clearly about difficult moral issues and that they have the courage to act in a morally responsible manner that is consistent with their reasons for action.

The second issue is the one that often proves to be most difficult to resolve in the public school setting. In a pluralistic society, public schools cannot endorse a particular set of values and an associated moral code that is derived from one religion or creed. Although a number of people argued in their briefs that the schools should inculcate Christian values in students, it is not the role of the schools in British Columbia to foster one set of religious preferences over another. In many cases, it is this reason alone which has resulted in parents electing to send their children to an independent school. The dilemma, then, is how to teach young people to be morally responsible without either indoctrinating them into a particular set of beliefs or promoting one religion in the schools.

Democratic forms of governments such as ours simply do not work well unless citizens recognise and act on their moral obligations to their communities. The continuation of democratic principles and institutions requires participation by citizens in civic, regional, and provincial affairs. If this participation is based entirely on self-interest, we run the danger of abridging some of the most cherished qualities of democratic government, such as the protection of minority interests (minority here refers to political power, not ethnic group membership) in the face of majority interests.

Development of Individuality

Everyone must find a meaningful role in life, a reason for toiling at life's work. We also are social beings, and the definitions of our life's work must be created within the tensions between the collective and the individual. Much of the work of youth revolves around the tasks associated with these tensions. As we have shown in Chapter 2, there is a sameness about school that tends to homogenize everything. Yet within this sameness, children strive to develop a sense of individuality. It matters little that often their striving for individuality merely means that they conform closely to a peer culture rather than an adult culture. What is important is that they learn the valuable lessons that to belong does not mean to be a slave to the group, that within all people are the roots of uniquenesss, and that all are worthy of dignity.

It is very difficult for educators to attend to the individual needs of learners in the context of the large bureaucratic structures that have developed in modern school systems. It is also critical that they do. Our interviews with learners has made it quite evident that failures to address students as individuals is one of the more serious shortcomings of school. These students were quick to praise the work of teachers who were able to treat learners as individual people with unique desires and needs.

In the current school curriculum there is little opportunity for students to exercise significant choice over their programs of study. While there are many locally developed courses, any particular learner will not have the opportunity to enrol in many of these optional courses. Nor is there much of an opportunity to experience choice among learning environments; most teachers teach quite similarly, and in all but the largest secondary schools there is little opportunity to choose from among different teachers.

Where choice does exist, it is in the decision to participate in extracurricular activities. The learners in our interviews often spoke of the excitement and challenge that these activities provided for them. The research literature on this topic is supportive of the value of these activities for the development of individuality. The findings of this research suggest that participation in extracurricular activities supports both the educational and socialization goals of school. There is also evidence that, with students from low educational advantage backgrounds, extracurricular participation has a stronger and more positive effect than with more advantaged youth. The biggest threat to the value of extracurricular activities is that as one moves up from elementary to secondary school, participation becomes more of an élite activity. Only the most capable get the chance to participate, as these activities become more competitive and oriented toward success at tournaments and contests.

Conclusions

There will always be a public debate over the goals of education. It is appropriate that such a debate occur often in democratic societies. We do not despair over the debate, but we are worried that the debate is not organized and that often decisions are made without sufficient debate over the merits or shortcomings of particular decisions.

We believe that the four goals of education we have articulated—the cultivation of mind, preparation for economic participation and vocational development, the development of moral responsibility, and the development of the person as an individual—constitute a sufficient set of goals for our schools. But schools do more than educate. They provide a safe environment for the socialization of the next generation to social norms and they supply an important custodial service to families and their children. We turn in the next chapters to a more detailed discussion of how these of these goals and functions operate in our schools.

7. The Social Contract Between Learners and Society: Rights and Responsibilities of Learners

For most learners, schools offer a well-marked, well-travelled, socially valued route to the future. Teachers who have travelled that route successfully act as guides. Parents, not all of whom have been successful enroute, anxiously desire their children to be successful travellers. For all appearances, the route is straight and narrow: elementary school connects to secondary school, which connects to post-secondary schooling or training (university or college being the most valued), which in its turn connects to a "good" job, a higher skilled and thus better paying job. A graduation certificate, a diploma, a degree—these are the end points of the schoolways; they are sources of pride, they are records of achievement.

To succeed, learners must comply with the rules of the road as well as demonstrate achievement that is in accordance with standards set by the system, the society, and the institutions that they aspire to attend. Learners must be responsible and cooperative in order to gain access to the currency necessary to pass through the toll gates along the way.

Most learners succeed in some measure, but also along the route many drop out or are diverted into less desirable sideroads leading to destinations thought to be of less value. These alternate routes to the future have fewer connections to preferred jobs. Also, for those who drop out, guides are no longer provided. Yet these learners likely require more time, more effort, more patience, and more of the resources of the society. Yet when they leave the school system, the responsibility of the system comes at an end. These learners likely required a different kind of guidance and more resources while they were on the main route, and they probably would have benefited from more support prior to beginning their journey through the network of schoolways.

To some, these side-tracked learners have been denied their rights—rights that Manley-Casimir (1987) calls egalitarian rights: "the claim to equality of access to education and employment without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, creed, mental, or physical handicap , or any other illegitimate criteria of discrimination." To others, these same learners (or their parents) have failed to live up to their responsibilities—responsibilities that lead to compliance with the rules and mores of the society. Living by the rules is at times difficult, but they are not pointless. They are required so that the rights of others can be assured. They also reflect the notion that the family is responsible for providing the necessary nurture and support required for the learner to navigate the route successfully. It is the tension between these two points of view that is the focus of this paper.

Rights of the Learner

It is with considerable hesitation that we address the subject of rights of the learner. We hesitate for a number of reasons. First, rights of learners may be extrapolated from legal documents, and the legalities are better described by the Commission's research group on governance, or by those with legal training. However, we feel that this topic is centrally important to a concern with learners as the focal point of schooling. Thus, we forge on.

In Canada, according to Sutherland (1976), the first clear consensus as to what should be the rights of children (thus learners) was provided by the Province of Ontario's 1916 Labour law designed to ensure each child a healthy mother and if necessary, provide her with free prenatal and hospital care. Also at that time, says Sutherland, W. J. Hanna (then the Provincial Secretary of Ontario) announced policies and programs by which all infants were to have access to pure and germ-free milk and water, and also regular attention from a visiting nurse. Town planners were to strive to provide children with sunshine and fresh air on all sides, proper sewage disposal, garbage collection, fire protection, and access to nearby supervised playgrounds. Schools were to take care to enter each child in the proper class and not

cause any child to sit beside a "defective or a consumptive" classmate. "Launch a generation with these advantages," Hanna exhorted, "and Canadians would solve their civic problems"(p.227).

Other legal documents of interest include:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26, signed by Canada in 1948. This article states that everyone has the right to an education.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, signed by Canada in 1959. In this document it is stated that children are entitled to free and compulsory elementary education.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, signed by Canada in 1976. Articles in this document recognize the right of everyone to education and to full development of the human personality.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, proclaimed April 17, 1982.

The British Columbia School Act and the School Support (Independent Schools) Act and their regulations and related policies of the Ministry of Education entitle every child to a tuition-free, public education, and assure the right of parents to educate their children outside the public school system, according to their own religious or moral convictions. The School Act also prohibits the use of corporal punishment.

The British Columbia Family and Child Service Act which provides for the protection of children from abuse and neglect both from parents and others.

According to Manley-Casimir, the Charter has resulted in a new emphasis on rights in Canada. This emphasis and the application of the Charter "may have important consequences for educational governance in general and the traditional relationship between students and schools in particular" (p.179). That is, disputes or conflicts between learners and the schools are likely to be settled in court rather than by resolution through compromise and cooperation at the local school or school board level. Manley-Casimir hastens to add that to date few disputes have been referred to the courts and that, prior to the Charter, the few disputes that were referred to the courts were usually resolved in favour of school officials.

In the submissions to the Commission and in the literature, all of the above documents are referred to singly or collectively as part of the rationale for arguments in support of many educational issues. These include for example:

- home-schooling;
- funding of independent schools;
- the right of parents to choose schools, programs, materials, and teachers for their children;
- the provision of day care, prenatal care, after-school care, and meals;
- the right of handicapped children to access to "normal" classrooms;
- the provision of extra resources for those learners with special needs, however those needs are defined;
- the right to instruction in a mother tongue;
- the need for curriculum reform so that the programs, materials, and practices of the school are non-sexist, non-racist, non-doctrinaire, and non-offensive to any group in the society;
- the right of the learner to fair and just treatment and evaluation;
- the right of parents to all information concerning their child;
- the right of the child not to be questioned or disciplined without the presence of an advocate;
- the need to provide programs for those who drop out of the school system;
- and, paradoxically, the need to exclude some learners from normal classrooms or the school system, because their presence infringes on the rights of others.

To us the legal arguments are of importance, but we believe that carefully thought out changes to the British Columbia School Act and its regulations are needed to bring about desired and proper changes to school practices so that

they reflect the "chartered" rights. To us, legislated change is a better way to address those concerns that have merit than are rulings resulting from costly court proceedings. We believe that it is far better to allow, indeed to require protagonists in a controversy to settle their dispute among themselves at a local level. Dispute resolution should include clearly specified opportunities for appeal to dispassionate, but interested parties. Turning to the courts for resolution of important educational questions might have to occur at times, but only in rare circumstances. We prefer not to run the risk of resolving disputes by appeal to procedural technicalities rather than substance.

Consideration should be given to the establishment by legislation of a third party conflict resolution procedure for education and of clarification of the mandate and authority of the various agencies which serve the children of British Columbia. We base this argument on several sources of information. First, in discussion with a number of parents' groups, we have often been requested to recommend a quasi-judicial process to resolve disputes between the public and the schools. Second, in the 1986 report of the Ombudsman of British Columbia it is reported that 64 complaints about the schools and school boards were received—five times as many as were received in relation to the Ministry of Education. In our view, this represents a significant number of unresolved issues. Also in this regard some submissions have called for the establishment of a Ministry of the Child which would coordinate the services of all agencies and delegate authority for children who do not receive required services due to inadequate cooperation among child service agencies. Other submissions have asked that the rights of the learner (and the parents as agents of the learner) be encoded in the School Act. Still others have requested that those regulations of the Ombudsman Act (section 7) that deal with education be proclaimed. It is quite clear to us that there does not currently exist a clear mechanism for the resolution of disputes among parents, learners and the schools.

A second reason for our hesitancy to address the subject of rights of the learner is the fervour of the current debate regarding the role of the state and its institutions towards the child, versus the role of the family and other institutions, such as the church, in the nurture and education of the youth of British Columbia. To us, this debate is about the social compact which describes and governs the relationship the state has with the learner and the relationship the learner has with the society and the school.

Manley-Casimir, in a paper requested by the Commission, defines the social compact as "an agreement characterized by common consent —one that is normative in conception and design but not primarily nor even necessarily legally enforceable or constitutionally compatible, though both properties might subsequently become true, depending on legislative change." Such a compact, says Manly-Casimir, requires common consent or shared belief of the society, and must be derived from both a conception of childhood and a conception of society's interest in and responsibility towards children. Further, he argues, such a conception rests on assumptions about such matters as the role of children in society, the value of children as members of the community, the best interest of children, the standards of care necessary for nurture of children, and the tension between dependence and independence of children as they grow to adulthood.

In the same paper, after review of the history of education in British Columbia, Manley-Casimir concludes that, "at least until very recent times ... the dominant view of the relationship between child and society, and between student and school has been, and ...continues in large part to be one in which the child is seen as raw material, certainly a future adult citizen but a citizen to be well socialized to the attitudes, values and pre-dispositions of the dominant culture." He goes on to state that such a compact is not necessarily wrong, but that the dominant conception of the compact has been one that has not "accorded any value or prominence to the proposition that children and youth have rights—beyond the minimalist notions of care and safety and freedom from abuse (in recent years)." Such a conception, he says, is one in which the role of the school is to socialize youth so that they reflect the dominant moral values and ideals of their society, and in which the task of schools is to prepare youth for "productive economic participation."

Data which illustrate recent changes in British Columbia society have been presented elsewhere in this report. Those changes are far reaching. For example, we have experienced and we continue to experience a decline in the birth rate, which in combination with increased life expectancy is resulting in a lower proportion of children in the society. As a result of immigration policies there has been an increase in the cultural plurality of the population of British Columbia. We are witness to a major change in the nature of family structure, illustrated by the rapid entry of women into the workplace, an increased number of marriage breakdowns, and increased family and personal mobility. Finally, there is evidence that an increased number of children now live near or in poverty.

Also elsewhere, we have stated that we find convincing the evidence that links family resources with school achievement. Strong supportive families enable their children to take full advantage of what schools have to offer. We have also reviewed the literature, considered relevant submissions to the Commission, and met with educators, social workers, probation officers, mental health officials, and health workers. As a result, we have concluded that in order to enhance the education of youth, there is need to redefine the social compact between the state and the child in British Columbia. Such definition will require deliberate public debate about rights and responsibilities. Models for service delivery such as those found in the reports to the Commission by the community working groups concerned with the parents' role and with pre-school care and early childhood education should be considered. It is the government which must lead this debate.

To us, the new compact should clarify the role of the school with regards to goals other than intellectual development. We believe that consideration should also be given to the adoption of methods and arrangements that would deliberately strive to develop social cohesion and tolerance of cultural differences. Smaller schools, cooperative teaching and learning strategies, provision of more choice, provision of vocational education for all learners, and formative evaluation procedures would all contribute to social cohesion.

We also believe that the public schools should be required to adopt a moral and values stance which is reflective of the moral and value position of a multicultural, pluralistic, democratic society. Such a moral-value position should be based on fundamental human rights as well as the traditional values of honesty, truthfulness, fairness, tolerance, and respect for the rights of others.

Finally, we believe that all children should be given sufficient support that, no matter what the circumstances of their family, will enable them to take advantage of what schools have to offer. In this regard, the government should consider ways by which support can be given the child without usurping the role of the family and creating a dependency cycle that will be difficult to break. In this regard, we have read U.S. studies of welfare dependency and are convinced that education has a critical role to play in the creation of dependency, For example, in the United States there is evidence that shows that long term welfare dependency is far less probable for mothers who have completed high school in comparison with mothers receiving welfare assistance who have not completed high school (Duncan, Hill, & Hoffman, 1988). Quality prenatal care, daycare, and after school care are needs of many families. Ideally, such programs will be established at or near the work place and be managed in ways that the parents will be involved.

Children who live in poverty must be supported according to need, especially in the pre-school years, so that they do not suffer because of a lack of the necessary skills and attitudes to succeed in school. These children must also be provided resources in order to meet course fees, to buy materials not provided by the public school system, and to enjoy proper nutrition and physical health. Children and families who require mental health and social services should have access to such support without first having to become crises. The school should not be asked to assume these support roles either by design or default. To enable proper coordination of such services, and to assure community involvement in the development of appropriate responses, serious consideration should be given to the establishment of community schools, and to regional advisory boards; there should be a "broker" or "advocate" in each region with legislated authority to force action for those children who fall between the cracks in the service system. Care should be taken, however, not to assign supervision and responsibility of this undertaking to educators—their mandate must be to educate youth. They should, of course, cooperate with other agencies and should be gatekeepers on behalf of the child.

All of the above will require a consensus on the part of the community and a commitment to accord the child welfare rights as well as rights to an education. The time for the debate required to define a new social compact is, in our opinion, now.

Responsibilities of the Learner

Simply put, all learners have the responsibility to make the most of the opportunities provided by the schools and not to abridge the rights of others to the same opportunity. The matter of responsibilities, however, is complex. To be responsible, one must able to take action, make moral decisions, or be capable of rational conduct without authorization or detailed guidance from others. Furthermore, one must be morally accountable for actions, and be held respon-

sible for those actions. A responsible person, therefore, is one who enjoys good credit or position or repute, who is respectable, trustworthy, and who is charged with certain duties. One may have responsibilities, but one must also be responsible.

The current school act and its regulations clearly state that students are responsible to the school for their conduct both to and from school as well as during the school hours. As well, the student is responsible for displaying attitudes and work habits that are proper with respect to learning. Homework must be done, attention must be paid, deportment must be appropriate, respect to the teacher must be given, effort must be expended, and attendance and punctuality are required. These rules sound somewhat Victorian and perhaps a little autocratic. Nevertheless, it is the case that learners must be responsible for their own learning and they must behave in a way that does not interfere with the rights to an education that their peers enjoy.

Complications arise with respect to those few pupils who do not behave responsibly. Again the school act and its regulations are clear. The young must continue to attend school, but the school may exclude the learner and may make alternate provision for instruction. After the age of 15, learners may be excluded from attending school on the grounds that they are abusing a privilege granted by society. However, schools have an obligation to be fair, and school officials usually accept the charge to educate learners about their responsibilities. These forces cause educators to avoid drawing hard lines, to tolerate irresponsible behaviour, and to provide students with several chances to succeed. In addition to all of this, schools provide counselling and other forms of support rather than to recommend that students be excluded from school. This state of affairs is the result of the belief that all youth are best kept in school for as long as possible and that given proper guidance, learners will develop responsible attitudes and behaviour. A number of students are of course excluded, but only after great effort has been made to turn the situation around.

Based on our interviews with 63 students and on the submissions made to the Commission, we note that the schools are seen by some to be infringing on the rights of the learner by insisting on attendance, punctuality, application to studies, and proper moral conduct. These people believe that the learner has the right not to comply with school rules as long as examinations are passed. Others see the schools as being too tolerant and thus allowing a minority of students to infringe on the rights of the majority at the expense of maintaining quality learning environments. Thus, a particular stance by the schools on the issue of student responsibility is seen by some as autocratic and by others as permissive.

In typical fashion, the school must navigate a route through these waters and often the school is caught in the middle. Fear of infringing on rights, plus a knowledge that there is a need for rules and expectations fundamental to effective learning and teaching situations, often results in ambivalence on the part of school officials. Such ambivalence encourages lack of confidence on the part of parents who desire clear standards of conduct. Many parents who are frustrated by this ambivalence turn to independent schools which have less concern for tolerance of a wide range of value systems. These schools suffer little, if any, ambivalence about the conflict between rights and responsibilities.

As the primary agents of socialization of youth, parents set the stage for their children's reactions to the conflicts between rights and responsibilities in school. Parents are the prime educators of children in the pre-school years. They assist the child to develop attitudes learning, adults, obligations, and others. If these attitudes are conducive to success in school and learning, the child will be able to take advantage of what the school has to offer. If these attitudes are not conducive to success in school and learning, the child could be disruptive to others and might require special attention. As it is important to the society that all children be provided a basic education, extra resources most likely will be expended on these children. We think that, for many children who might be facing problems similar to what we outline here, preventative measures could be taken through parent education programs initiated by the school as well as by health and social agencies.

The school builds on the platform provided by the parents. Procedures used by the school to set rules and to enforce rules should be instructive in that they should further the development of responsible action. Schools should expect and receive the support of parents, provided that schools are fair and reasonable in their expectations. Schools should expect much on the part of the learner, both with respect to behaviour and to application to studies. The literature in education is clear on the role of high expectations for the achievement of the goals of education. High expectations are clearly associated with increased learning and more favorable student attitudes toward school. In this regard, several

of the new Canadians interviewed by us indicated that much more was expected by the schools of their homeland. As one student so aptly put it,

> *When we were in Germany, we already knew 5 times 5 and that at the end of grade one. When we were here, at the end of the grade two, that's when we first learned 5 times 5. So, I don't know, if I would've stayed in Germany, I don't know how I would have done in schooling. But I would say that schools should be harder. Like I hate saying it, but it's true. Like everybody in Germany, they're smart. They're going to be somebody. Here, I don't know, it's...It's also different timing in Germany. They go, they teach you something. They drill it in your mind. Here they just go over something. If you don't got it that's your luck. Like that?*
>
> *Well, I don't know, I just...if it were up to me I would change the vacations. I would shorten it, especially the summer one. 'Cause lots of people just get bored anyway. It's a real luxury to have moved here where you get two months off. But you also don't...you just don't get very far.*

Students must commit themselves to their studies. As a student who had immigrated from Laos told us, "Work hard now, and you have fun later in life." To her, the attitude of many of her classmates was, "Enjoy youth because you will have to work hard when you are older."

The point here is that few of the students who were interviewed, including those in independent schools, indicated that the demands of school were such that school occupied a central, meaningful place in their lives. Some students did indicate that a particular teacher did cause them to be actively involved and consumed by school learning. Such was, however, rare. We wonder, therefore, how students can be expected to take seriously the call to be responsible learners, especially if the demands of the school are such that not applying oneself fully to one's studies is of little consequence to success. We believe that teachers should employ methods of instruction that would result in school occupying a central and meaningful place in the learner's life. Teachers who were commended by the students interviewed were seen as models of learning for learning's sake. They were also considered to be examples of responsible conduct, showing respect for their students and the work of learning. Students' absences from these teachers' classes were rare because something worthwhile would be missed. These students were motivated to complete school tasks. And as we argue in the next chapter, this high degree of motivation is a result of good teaching, just as is a high degree of learning.

Learners must be helped to acquire skills and dispositions that will enable them to work well with others in the activities of the school, whether involved directly in learning, or in play, or in social interchange. They must be given more choice and involvement in what and how they learn. The ideal is for them to be the most active person in the classroom. They must see that every lesson is important and that to miss one is detrimental. They must see that the responsibility for learning is theirs and that true learning is hard but satisfying work.

Conclusion

Schools have the obligation of ensuring that all students are aware of their rights both as citizens and as students. The "welfare" rights of the child lead us to recommend that better coordination and delivery of social and health services be undertaken. Two models seem feasible. The first is to extend the mandate of the school and to provide the school with the necessary resources. The other is to establish a means by which the efforts of the appropriate agencies are efficiently and effectively coordinated. We prefer the latter and suggest that the government initiate debate regarding a new social compact for children. After the compact is defined there needs to be legislation to establish mandates and authority and to provide children with the protection of an advocate, ombudsman, or broker.

The matter of responsibilities is one of schools and other agencies accepting the role of educating and helping parents to teach their children, during the formative preschool years, those attitudes and skills so essential to success in school. Furthermore, schools need to plan, as in any other area of the curriculum, an approach for teaching children about their responsibilities as an integral aspect of their rights. We suggest, therefore, that if school were to occupy a truly meaningful place in the lives of children, then the matter of responsibilities would be greatly simplified. Learners would be more eager to learn and control would not be an issue. More is said about these issues in the next two chapters.

8. The Work of School: Learning and Teaching

In this chapter we focus on the heart of schoolwork. As we pointed out in the chapter on *The Goals of Education*, schools perform educational, socialization, and custodial functions. While the socialization and custodial functions are important, they clearly rank behind the educational functions of schools, for it is with this function that schools engage in activities for which no other social agency is systematically responsible.

Learning in Classrooms

Learning is hard work. There is simply no way of making it otherwise. This is not to say that learning cannot or should not be fun. Nor does it mean that learning cannot result in pleasure, a sense of accomplishment, or a feeling of challenge. The hard work of learning can also result in failure and discouragement, pain and embarrassment, or avoidance and withdrawal. In school learning, it is the job of the teacher to enhance the positive aspects of learning and to minimize the negative. But for learning in school to be effective, teachers need to do their job without reducing the work that students must exert in order to learn. Learning will not be effective without properly directed effort and work, and without some risk on the part of the learner.

It is both amusing and distressing that so much energy seems to be devoted to making learning an easier activity. It is amusing because there have been so many popular movements and commercial products that are devoted to this cause. These have ranged from listening to foreign language recordings during sleep in order to improve vocabulary, to expensive courses (many of which mimic intensive psychotherapy experiences) which are designed "to liberate the mind for learning." Similar attempts to make learning easy can be found in the school curriculum, where texts are made easier by "dumbing" them down—using vocabulary and syntax that lowers the difficulty level of the text—and teachers often do the hard work of learning by simplifying difficult material. As a result, teachers learn more but often students learn less as they study predigested content. People subscribe to these movements and purchase these products probably to increase their chances of reaping the rewards of learning without exerting the hard work. Most, if not all of these experiences fail to produce the effortless learning that they so often claim to provide. No doubt there will always be people who want to take a shortcut. Taking a shortcut, however, can lead to the ever present danger of missing the road. Some destinations can be reached only by taking a long road, and learning is one of those destinations.

Perhaps, as well, the search for the magic learning potion has been motivated by a sense that learning is tedious, boring, and without passion. After all, if learning is such a dreadfully wearisome activity, anything that will make it proceed more quickly is worth investigating. Many, many authors and critics through the years have commented on the tedium of school in contrast to the excitement of learning outside of school. This theme was perhaps the most central of issues behind the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. The rhetoric of relevance was a rhetoric for excitement and passion. That these criticisms recur from time to time can be taken as prima facie evidence that school learning is often dull and dreary. Is this a necessary condition of school? Most teachers would answer no; many students would answer yes.

What is distressing about these magic shortcuts is that they delude people into believing that there is a way to learn that is easy. They also represent a belief that learning should be easy. Indeed, there is some research evidence that shows that people who perceive themselves or others to have had to work harder to learn are less capable. That is, most people believe that less able learners have to work harder to learn, and people who have to work hard are less able. There is, no doubt, some truth to this observation for all of us. For most people, there are some learning tasks that are easy to accomplish, while the same task for others is quite hard to achieve. When these "easy" tasks are attempted, they are seen to require little effort. "Why," we ask, "cannot all learning be like this?" But this question is like the search for the Holy Grail. When anyone is challenging their learning horizons they will at times be required to expend considerable effort. The road to competence is long and hard, and the road to expertise is far longer and harder.

Learning

Since William James's famous *Talks to Teachers* nearly 100 years ago, educators have been turning to psychologists for answers to the question "How do people learn?" The question is asked because if there were a clear answer to this question, it might be possible once and for all to develop a scientifically based pedagogy that would eliminate the guesswork from teaching. While progress in educational research is slowly mounting, many educators and policy makers have been vexed by the extent to which simple, straightforward answers to this question have not yet been given.

The history of psychology in this century seems to be a waxing and waning of schools of thought which often provide quite discrepant advice concerning how to teach. Perhaps the problem has been that the question of learning has been almost exclusively the domain of psychologists. More recently, scholars from many related fields have begun to explore this question. Anthropologists, linguists, sociologists, curriculum theorists, and educational researchers, among others, have explored the question of how people learn. The result is a growing body of much more interesting research findings than is true of past efforts. As well, there is growing agreement about how learning takes place. The agreement is at once promising and sobering.

The promising elements in recent research on learning is that we now know more about how people learn. Put simply, people learn by trying to make sense of the world. The best way of doing this is to relate what one is learning to something one already knows. There are many ways in which people try to make sense of the world when they learn. What is clear, however, is that the more systematically one approaches the learning of something new, the more successful one will be. These "learning strategies" have been studied in a large range of settings, with many different types of people, and with numerous tasks. We know from research that many learning strategies can be effective (for example, paraphrasing, summarizing, creating mental images, grouping or ordering material to be learned, outlining, creating hierarchies, checking for failures at comprehension, and maintaining an alert and relaxed composure). We also know that these strategies can be taught, and when they are taught and used, learners can become much more successful.

The statement that people learn by trying to make sense of the subject that they are studying might seem so simple as to be a commonplace. Placed against previous conceptions of learning which assumed that learners were merely empty vessels to be filled with knowledge, the more recent approach is quite different. As well, the implications for teaching of this generalization about learning are profound. These implications are the sobering elements in this search. If learners proceed by trying to relate what they are learning to what they already know, then what they already know will strongly influence what they learn. If teachers had exclusive control over what learners know, this state of affairs would not constitute much of an obstacle. But in most cases teachers do not have such control, nor will they ever.

What this means is that in any given teaching situation, teachers are not able to predict with accuracy what any particular student will learn. To be sure, the expert teacher is able to make generalized predictions on the basis of knowledge of the subject matter that is being taught and experience with similar learners. But these general predictions will always have to be modified and adapted to the particular students taught in a particular lesson. And while there may be regularities in the mechanisms by which people learn, the actual content that is learned and the way in which it is placed in the learner's memory is highly influenced by idiosyncratic features of the learner's prior knowledge and use of learning strategies. Teaching, in other words, is a profession that deals with a high degree of ambiguity and requires constant decision making under uncertainty. We return to this theme in the discussion about teaching.

Learning is both constructed and strategic. It is constructed in the sense that students develop understanding by building upon what they already know about the world. It follows that learning becomes easier once a person knows something about what is to be learned. It also follows that learning is more difficult if the student knows nothing about what is to be learned. Put differently, if the student cannot make sense of what is to be learned, if the material is meaningless, then learning is both more difficult and less thorough. It is far easier to forget information that is not linked to prior knowledge than it is to forget information that is associated with the learner's previous understanding of similar content. Well developed and well organized minds are characteristic of knowledgeable people.

Learning is strategic in the sense that the search for understanding is not random. Learners follow particular approaches to the construction of their understanding. For many decades, these approaches, what people often refer to as learning styles, were considered to be aspects of the learner's personality. As such, they were thought to be enduring at-

tributes of the learner that had to be either accommodated through the provision of different instructional approaches or accepted as limitations to the extent to which the student could learn. While both of these interpretations of learning styles have some support in the literature, there is growing agreement that the strategies that successful learners often develop on their own can be taught to less successful learners. Once they have learned these strategies and are taught how and when to use them, less successful learners have been able to reach much higher levels of achievement.

These generalizations are well supported by research on learning in a number of academic disciplines. They are also well accepted, consensually validated principles in education, particularly the principles concerning meaningful learning. It is remarkable that they so often go unheeded in the way in which schools are organized, curriculum is developed and implemented, and instruction is undertaken. The question is why do our schools continue to operate with such a discrepancy between widely held principles and ideals and the reality of daily routine. We return to this question below.

In the section on goals, we wrote that there is a close relationship between the subject matter that is to be learned and the procedures that students employ to use the subject matter. Psychologists refer to these two features of information as declarative knowledge and procedural *knowledge*. Declarative knowledge consists of static, inert information. It is the facts, concepts, principles, and relationships that together constitute what most people consider a subject in the curriculum. But there is more to the knowledge that is the basis of a topic in the curriculum than these inert aspects. This extra content is most easily seen in mathematics, where the procedures used to solve problems are generally acknowledged as legitimate topics to be learned. There are problems to be solved and mental procedures to be used in all subjects in the curriculum, not only mathematics, even though they are not as readily apparent as in mathematics. The mental acts that are used to process the facts, concepts, principles, and relationships of declarative knowledge constitute *procedural knowledge*. A complete treatment of a school subject requires attention to both of these forms of knowledge.

These distinctions between declarative and procedural knowledge are not merely useful for academic discussions, they are important for informed discussions of policy issues in education. The submissions to the Commission indicate clearly that the most important goal of schooling held by British Columbians is intellectual development. As we showed in the section on the goals of schooling, the pre-eminent characteristic of intellectual development is the cultivation of the mind, which means the development of creative, flexible, and autonomous thinkers. These attributes of thinking require more than meaningless, rote learning of facts and concepts. It means that students need to be taught how to think, not merely what to think.

Our vision for our children should be education, not indoctrination. All too often, when people speak of intellectual development, they have in mind training children in a body of knowledge as if that knowledge were immutable, a received doctrine that other much wiser people have created. Such a conception is misguided and cannot serve as a basis for a system of education. A more far reaching vision is portrayed by Maxine Green, a philosopher of education at Columbia University. According to Professor Green,

> *mind is involved with experience and lived situations. It has to do with the funding of meanings, or the sedimentation of meanings, all sorts of meanings. These become part of and indeed constitute the self; they compose the background against which new encounters and experiences are projected. To educate someone is, in a very fundamental sense, to empower someone to add continually to the richness and multiplicity of such meanings. It is important to remember...that the realm of meanings is wider than that of true-false meanings. It includes moral meanings, poetic meanings. It includes...the kinds of meanings some people achieve when they realize that they are capable, along with others, of repairing what is deficient and painful, solving social problems, altering the order of things. (Green, 1984, p. 287)*

Professor Green's conception of mind is important in several respects. First, mind is "involved with experience and lived situations." It is impossible to develop qualities of mind without at the same time being involved in action, in testing these qualities through life. The work of the mind is the work of the body, of the soul, of the feelings and emotions. Second, "to educate...is...to empower." An educated person has the moral courage to act. A democratic society requires such moral courage as a foundation upon which its institutions are based. Third, to be educated is to be capable of "altering the order of things." The combination of lived experience and moral courage, along with knowledge integrated with skills to act, provides a person with capabilities to make a difference in the world.

It is clear that this conception of the educated mind, which is very similar to the position we have advanced in the section on the goals of education, requires an integrated whole. A separation of study from action, of concepts from experience, of moral critique from moral action, of skills from knowledge is anathema to the conception of education that we believe is necessary to guide the programs of our schools.

It is crucially important that in British Columbia we do not become trapped in the growing trend in education over the last two decades or so of divorcing skill from content. We must not define the objectives of our curriculum as discrete skills, as if our children could perform such skills like trained circus animals. The subordination of content to skills, of the whole to its parts does not promote a conception of education that we have argued. Such an approach offers a false sense of precision and control. For while a skills based approach to schooling is compatible with a test-driven, systems analysis view of control, it is not compatible with a comprehensive definition of education. Skills are important, but as a means by which a greater sense of mind is approached and as a means of applying the work of the mind to a lived experience. It is through the frames of reference provided by the evolving disciplines that skills should be taught and it is through the application of disciplined enquiry that skills take on meaning.

We have developed in education a puzzling paradox. We hold fast to the idea that learning is an individual enterprise. People learn, not groups. Yet in virtually every other meaningful human activity, it is a group that is the most important unit, not the individual. Whether it is the family, community, team, working group, government, or business, what is important is the way in which the individuals involved come together to form a group, not merely a collection of individuals. While the collective learning of the group is no doubt dependent on the quality of learning achieved by its individual members, it is also the case the group's learning is not identical to the collection of individual achievements.

We are quick to recognize in school the achievements and failures of individuals, but only in passing do we acclaim the achievements or attend to the failures of a group. When we do attend to group performance, it is usually in extra-curricular activities—team sports, band, choir. What is paradoxical is that we have committed ourselves to the belief that learning is something that a single person does, but we have organized the activity of schooling into groups. It is very rare that learning activities are actually performed individually, yet individuals are held responsible for the learning.

Similarly, teaching is most often conducted in a group setting, yet only in passing does the teaching address directly the fact that the group is there. The classroom recitation is clearly the most frequently used teaching strategy found in classrooms throughout the industrialized world, as has been shown convincingly by Hoekter and Ahlbrand (1969). In this regard, British Columbia's teachers instruct in the same general way that their colleagues everywhere teach. The most popular approaches to teaching by recitation involve the teacher interacting with individuals in the group context—teachers talk, individual students listen; teachers ask questions, individual students respond; teachers assign drills, individual students practice. These patterns of teaching are amazingly enduring; they seem to survive regardless of the extent to which educational philosophies change or reforms are attempted.

We believe that the virtually unquestioned perspective that learning is an individual enterprise seriously limits what can be accomplished in schools. This is not to say that our schools in general have not been successful at attaining satisfactory levels of achievement based on an individualistic approach to learning and teaching. In so far as tests measure important educational achievements (and they do have serious limitations in this regard), the data that we review in the next chapter on standards do indicate that British Columbia's schools are successful. But our schools have the potential to reach farther than they have. One way of enhancing the performance of our schools is to more explicitly recognize the essentially social and interpersonal nature of learning and to capitalize on the group organization of classroom life, rather than ignore it and act as if learning in a group is merely students pursuing individual achievements. We address this issue again in the section on teaching.

It is important to recognize the nature of the composition of groups in schools. As we have demonstrated in other sections of this report, British Columbia is a widely diverse society. Even though we continue to group children for instruction largely on the basis of age (and often in secondary school by ability or achievement level), there is an enormous range of individual differences in most classrooms in the province. This diversity is as much an asset as it is a problem. From the point of view of the custodial and socialization functions of schools, diversity among the student body provides a social matrix in which students have wider opportunities for enriching experiences than they would have in a more

uniform setting. This was pointed out to us by a counsellor in a large school district who viewed cultural diversity more as an opportunity to develop intergroup understanding than as an impediment to the achievement of high educational standards.

It is undeniable, however, that the growing diversity of the children and youth of British Columbia also presents a range of individual differences which interact with the educational functions of school. Most teachers understand that the wider range of background experiences and aptitudes for learning that children bring with them to school present new educational problems. Many of these individual differences are described graphically in the profiles of the learners of British Columbia presented earlier. There are many ways in which schools address aptitude and background differences in students. Some of these adaptations are productive and useful; some are not.

Most educators would agree that teaching and instruction needs to be accommodated to individual differences. Rarely have we heard teachers comment that individual differences among their students are of no consequence. Students hold the same beliefs. Most agree that one of the hallmarks of good teaching is the ability of the teacher to provide help and assistance to each student. The converse of this is also true; students do not like teachers who ignore their special needs or who do not provide assistance when it is requested. Our interviews with students, reported in an earlier section of this report, reflect these opinions.

Probably the most common procedure for adapting teaching to individual differences in learners is streaming or tracking. In this procedure, children are homogeneously clustered either as smaller groups within a class or as larger, separate classes. The justification for tracking is that less diversity within a group creates an instructional situation that is more manageable and that provides opportunities for all students to succeed. More capable students are not slowed down by less capable students, and therefore their learning is accelerated. Less capable students are not compared directly to their more advanced peers and therefore these students do not suffer the consequences of lowered esteem. They also should be able to move at their own pace with more help from the teacher.

Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that tracking does not really operate in the way that it is intended to work. Corno and Snow (1986) have outlined three criteria that should be used to evaluate any program of adaptive instruction, that is, instruction which is adapted to the individual differences of learners. As a technique for adaptive instruction, tracking should meet these three criteria. First, it should insure that all students, including those who are predicted to be unsuccessful because of low aptitude, achieve the common goals of schooling (for example, the goals that we discussed in the earlier section on *The Goals of Education*). Second, the program should not maintain or create inequities in achieving the common goals of education. Third, no students should be poorly served by the adaptive program, that is, no one should be worse off because of participation in the program compared with what they would have achieved in a conventional program.

As an adaptive instructional procedure, the educational research literature indicates that tracking fails to achieve desired results on all three criteria. For example, in the Second International Mathematics Study (McKnight et al, 1987) results from the United States show that in three types of Grade 8 algebra programs (remedial, typical, and enriched), the higher the track, the more algebra was actually taught. Obviously, students placed in the lowest track had less opportunity to learn algebra than did students in the higher tracks. In this case, tracking actually limited the opportunity to learn algebra for those students who most needed the opportunity. Furthermore, the rate of learning algebra for students in these three tracks was highly related to the amount of algebra taught. Not surprisingly, the more you are taught, the more you learn. Obviously, these U.S. programs fail to meet expectations on all three criteria. Related findings from the United States and Britain are reported by University of Wisconsin researchers (Gamoran & Berends, 1987), who have argued that, in addition to actually depressing achievement, tracking is associated with lower expectations concerning future success and lower educational aspirations. Tracking also tends to polarize students into two groups: high track students support the ethos of school and low track students take on a pronounced anti-school bias. As well, teachers prefer to teach the higher track classes, believing that teaching lower track classes is a lower status assignment.

Tracking is a simple, institutional response to the problem of diversity in students' capabilities to learn. It is more of an attempt to simplify the task of the teacher than it is a mechanism to adapt teaching to learners' individual differences. Because of its pernicious social and attitudinal effects, rather than an instructional program tracking is more of a

sorting device that steers some adolescents to more education and higher paying occupations, while others are directed to less education and lower paying occupations. In any event, tracking falls far short of its expectations.

Perhaps the most controversial form of tracking is the isolation of handicapped learners from their non-handicapped peers, either in special classrooms in a regular school or in specialized schools. We have received many briefs urging the adoption of policies of integration for handicapped learners into the mainstream of educational programs. While there have been some requests for the maintenance of pull-out programs for special needs learners, these requests have clearly been in the minority (and usually associated with parents or groups concerned with mildly mentally handicapped learners). In general, recommended policies for integration are based on the concept of the least restrictive environment. This refers to programming that provides the best opportunity for participating in standard educational experiences within the capabilities of the learner and the ability of the school district to provide the service.

We also have had the opportunity to meet a number of handicapped learners who have been integrated into mainstream programs. We have been told of the impact of such a placement on the educational and social experiences of the handicapped learner and on teachers and the learner's classmates. Many of these stories are poignant and moving. It is clear to us that integration is a demanding policy to follow and that many difficult issues are raised by this policy. It is hard on teachers, who often have little or no training for working with handicapped students; it is difficult for counsellors and administrators, who must devote considerable time to the integrated student; and it is challenging to other students, who must overcome fears and attitudes about handicapped people. It is also clear to us that integration is a policy that has far more merits than limitations.

There are no simple answers to the problem of dealing with individual differences in learning. In many respects, dealing with these differences constitutes the most pressing instructional problem that our teachers face. There are many promising developments in research on teaching and instruction that might help solve these problems. Some of these programs provide alternate instructional procedures for students who lack particular abilities to learn from teaching. Others take a more innovative stance and attempt to develop in students the aptitudes that they lack but must have in order to learn from classroom teaching. What is quite clear, however, is that teachers need to learn some of these new procedures and to experiment with their implementation. In support of their efforts, we need to provide research evidence on the effects of these instructional innovations with the children of British Columbia and we need to provide teachers with well planned, long-term in-service education. These in-service activities need themselves to be based on the growing body of literature on how to help teachers to learn most effectively. The work of the research group on personnel addresses some of the procedures that can be used to provide high quality in-service education for teachers.

Motivation

Motivation is a concept that often carries very different meanings for different people. While few people would deny that it is important to be motivated to work hard at something, there are many notions of what it means to be motivated.

The concept of motivation is often confused with desire to accomplish. One often hears people speak about children who seem eager to do something, such as practicing piano, learning a second language, or participating in team sports, as "being motivated." It is almost as if "being motivated" is an advantageous possession, much like wealth or a two-parent family. Morality is often part of this conception of motivation, and guilt and blame are often associated with low motivation for a task, particularly if success at the task is important. A child who is capable of doing something well but who does not work hard at it is blameworthy. People often say that such a child is lazy. As well, children feel guilty if they have performed poorly at something for which they are capable of success, but at which they have not worked hard.

Another common conception of motivation is that it is separate from the actual activities of learning. In this sense, motivation is a quality that is necessary for learning, but it is the result of something other than the learning task. In many walks of life, people often talk about this sense of motivation as something that is the result of factors tangential to the learning or working situation. This sense of motivation is instrumental. A person is motivated to do something because of the reward that is gained from success at the task. For example, children work hard at school to get

good grades, athletes work hard at their sport in order to win a championship, and employees work hard on the job in order to gain promotions and wage increases.

Motivation for school learning concerns the extent to which children initiate work, the quality of their involvement with that work, and their ability to sustain work on school tasks. In this sense, motivation can include the conceptions discussed above, but it also can include more. People can be motivated to work on school tasks because of something within themselves, and they can be motivated to work on school tasks because of the utilitarian value of success. However, regardless of the conception one uses it is clear that motivation is an important concept for learners in schools.

Just as with the concept of learning, recent research helps clarify the nature of motivation in school. This research points to motivation as a more dynamic concept than had previously been considered. Most importantly, motivation should not be considered an attribute of a person's personality. It is not the case that some children are more motivated than others. A more accurate statement is that motivation is an interaction between, on the one hand, the tasks that teachers pose for children and on the other hand, the ways in which children perceive these tasks and their explanations to themselves of their performance on these tasks. In other words, motivation is not so much a magical quality that some students possess and others do not, as it is a quality much like learning itself. Motivation is a result of good teaching just as learning is, and it cannot be attributed solely to something that students bring with them to school.

As we have tried to show in much of our work on the Learners of British Columbia, the school is not isolated from the wider community. The interests and pursuits of children outside of school are reflected in their motivation for accomplishing school tasks. School and its work cannot be separated from the job of growing up as a member of a wider social system. Our schools will fall short of our ideals for them if educators do not recognise this relationship. Holland and Andre (1987) clarify this important relationship between school and community by showing that

> *high schools and the opportunities that they provide for adolescents have meanings only as defined both by the social characteristics of communities in which they exist and by the specific characteristics of the high schools themselves. Community, in the sense referred to here, means the increasingly larger social networks—family, peer groups, neighborhoods, ethnic groups, towns, cities, regions—in which adolescents and schools find themselves. (p.450)*

In our interviews with a small sample of British Columbia's children and youth, we have heard first hand accounts of how the job of growing up is managed in these interesting times in which we live. We have portrayed the themes in the lives of these young people in an earlier chapter. It is startling that so much of what these children and adolescents find exciting is not mirrored in their school experiences. It seems to us that school is something that these children fit into otherwise very busy lives. Perhaps this has always been true and today's children and their schools are not fundamentally different from earlier times.

It struck us from these interviews that the young people in our sample found the socialization functions of schools far more engaging than the educational functions. They were much more intrinsically motivated to work on the former and they were more extrinsically motivated for the latter. In other words, they became involved in socialization functions because the tasks were engaging, while they became involved in educational functions because of the rewards that resulted from success at these tasks. Educators should not be surprised at these differences, nor should students be blamed for them. It is perhaps not fair to compare students' motivation for the common requirements of educational tasks to the more individualistic goals of socialization tasks. Nonetheless, we expect students to engage in and succeed at educational tasks just as much as the socialization tasks. How can we approach this objective?

First, abundant evidence exists in the research literature that shows the importance of choice and control in fostering motivation. All aspects of motivation (initiating work, the quality of the work, and persistence at completing the work) are enhanced when people have choice and control over the nature of their work. This generalization is true of children and adults, in educational as well as other work environments. It is worthy to note that in the interviews the students often mentioned something about choice when they spoke about improvements in the curriculum and in what they thought constituted good teaching. The Commissioner's Student Task Force had many similar comments, as did many briefs, which addressed issues of choice and control over work (or the corollary of control, responsibility) as something that schools should provide learners.

A tension that is always present in school is between the need to achieve common curricular goals and the need to provide students with choice to enhance motivation. We have argued in the section on the *Goals of Education* that a common curriculum is necessary to ensure that schools pursue educational as well as other important functions. Beyond the common curriculum, one way of enhancing students' motivation for the work of school is to allow more choice in the selection of courses. But there are other ways of providing choice, particularly in the way in which instruction is organized and presented. In general, there is very little flexibility in the way in which teachers instruct and in the options allowed for students. Yet motivation can strengthened by allowing learners opportunities to select activities and tasks within courses, as well as by providing learners with flexibility in time to work on school tasks and in the social organization of that work. We believe that great strides can be made in the quality of students' motivation if educators were to explore and implement more opportunities for students' choice of their tasks in school.

Second, educational and psychological research has repeatedly demonstrated that the ways in which students interpret their learning experiences has enormous influence over their motivation for subsequent learning activities. For example, learners have less motivation for future tasks if they believe that they were successful at an earlier task because of luck or because the task was easy. Success that learners attribute to their own effort leads to heightened motivation. Similarly, a sense of efficacy can be enhanced in students if they are shown that other students like themselves can be successful. What is important to emphasize is that success or failure, *by itself*, has less influence on motivation than does the learner's interpretation of that success or failure. Two students with exactly the same level of achievement at a subject might have different levels of subsequent motivation for working on that subject depending on the way in which they interpret the causes of their success or failure.

Third, motivation to labour at the hard work of school is closely related to the student's ability to do the work. It is not simply the case that the *will* to learn leads to success, there must also be a *way* to learn. We are referring here to the strategies and procedural knowledge that almost all children are capable of learning. Particularly in reference to the higher order learning that we believe to be the most important result of schooling, it is critical that students have the opportunity to develop motivation to learn as well as the motivation to perform. Corno and Snow (1986), in their work on adaptive teaching, make it clear that motivation to learn involves the learning of higher order mental abilities, not merely the desire to complete whatever tasks are assigned by teachers. In this sense, motivation to learn is closely related to concepts of autonomy and flexibility of thought that we refer to in the *Goals* chapter.

Many new and exciting approaches to teaching have been developed that lead to increased student motivation for school work. Programs like peer tutoring and peer counselling often provide opportunities to enhance students' motivation by using some of the procedures discussed here, as do many other instructional practices such as cooperative learning strategies. More is written about these procedures in the next section of this chapter.

Teaching

In the first two sections of this chapter, we have shown that learning and motivation are not simple, mechanical activities. Both are part of the process of students attempting to make sense of their worlds. Effective learning and heightened motivation for school learning are unlikely to result from teaching that is based on the premise that the job of the teacher is to control children and to transmit information. A more tenable premise, one that is consistent with the view of learning and motivation that we have portrayed here, is that the job of the teacher is to direct the minds of their students, particularly toward the development of higher order mental abilities. To do this well is to perform one of our society's most important functions.

It is unfortunate that in both the professional literature and the popular press there has been such a long tradition of attacking teachers. It is a most peculiar preoccupation, one in which few people interested in education have been able to escape. Many reasons could be advanced for this tradition, but it is not our task to explore these issues here. What is clear, however, is that it is time to stop the prolonged battles that have been waged in British Columbia for the last decade or so over education. These battles have frequently focussed on teachers and their work. Our children deserve a more stable environment in which to develop the capabilities necessary to lead fulfilling lives and to cultivate attitudes toward learning that will serve them after their years in school.

Teaching is an enigmatic enterprise. It is full of contradictions, of paradoxes, of conflicts. We have portrayed some of these dilemmas, at least as they concern learners in schools, in an attempt to paint a realistic picture of some of the enduring and conflicting themes in the practice of education. The themes that we have discussed focus on learners or the interaction of learners with schooling. We have adopted this focus because it is the learner, after all, who is the reason why schooling and education exist, and we believe that all decisions in education must be measured by their impact on the quality of children's experiences in school. Our discussion of teaching conforms to our conviction that teaching is an activity that supports learners and serves their needs. While we recognize that there are many important issues concerning teachers that do not directly influence students, we do not discuss those issues here. Those issues are discussed in the report by the personnel research group.

Teachers are the people who are ultimately responsible for the three major functions of schooling discussed in the *Goals* chapter: education, socialization, and custody. They are "street-level bureaucrats" who transform social and educational policy into the actual environments in which our children spend thousands of hours of their lives. Teachers' practices associated with the three functions of schooling are strongly influenced by what Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) refer to as the cultures of teaching. Like all cultures, the cultures of teaching, including teachers' beliefs, knowledge, values, and patterns of behaviour, are elusive and difficult to define. They are important to understand, however, because it has been so well documented that teacher practices are very difficult to change. Yet, like all activities that take their meaning from the wider society in which they take place, teaching must change if it is to remain relevant to its communities. The requirement that teaching must evolve along with changes in the wider society were understood clearly by the last Royal Commission on Education.

> *Education would certainly be in a decline if the same methods of instruction were being used to teach the pupils of today that were in vogue for teaching their parents. However, a critical review of teaching methods is called for, because, although every improvement depends upon change, not every change is in the nature of an improvement. This is especially so when dealing with such a complex matter as education. (p.350)*

This quote from the Chant Commission report is just as cogent now as it was a quarter of a century ago. While much that can be seen today in the classrooms of our province's schools looks the same as it might have decades earlier, there is also much that is different. The classroom recitation is still the most widely used teaching strategy, as we have discussed earlier. In the midst of this reliance on recitation, many of the British Columbia's teachers are exploring newer and potentially more powerful and engaging teaching methods which have been based on educational research conducted in the last two decades.

It would be foolish to recommend one particular teaching method as superior to others. It is quite clear from research that many different teaching methods can be appropriate, depending on many factors, including the subject matter that is being taught, the age of the learners, the background characteristics of the learners, the type of school, and the expertise of the teacher. (For the interested reader, exhaustive reviews of the body of research on teaching is compiled in the *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, edited by Merlin Wittrock). We also now know more from the extensive study of how schools change and how teachers improve their practices. It is not productive to decide at a central bureaucracy how people should teach and then tell people to teach in that manner. Regardless of the desires of senior policy officials, such "top down" approaches to teacher reform simply do not work. Top down reforms have been attempted thousands of times, and there are virtually no documented successes in the literature. It is far better to engage teachers in the critical reappraisal of their own work and to provide them with the resources, including access to specialists and to other teachers, that will enable them to improve. It is also critical that the process of changing and improving teaching be long term and sustained. Single-day workshops do not provide the mechanisms to produce the changes that are necessary. After all, teachers are learners too, and everything that we discussed about learning and motivation of children and adolescents applies equally well to teachers.

There are many reasons why schools and teaching are difficult to change. We will not dwell overly long on these reasons. However, it is worthwhile to mention one or two, because they are deeply embedded in the way in which schools operate as bureaucracies.

One of the most paradoxical reasons why schools are slow to change is the very reason why people clamour for them to change. It is that the public and their elected officials want schools to be held accountable for the achievement of their goals. By itself, this is not a reactionary force. It is reasonable and expected that an institution that consumes as

much of the public purse as does schooling should be accountable for the way in which the money is spent. The problem is the way in which accountability mechanisms operate. In the public's eye this is often phrased as a question of standards. We discuss in detail the question of standards and how they operate in the next chapter, but a word or two is appropriate here as well.

The easiest and by far the most often used mechanism to assess the success of schools is through group testing. In British Columbia, many school districts use published group tests of achievement to measure children's success at school, particularly at the elementary level. Although these tests are widely administered, they are not often used directly as measures of the achievement of educational goals. Another group testing program that is more specifically assigned the role of assessing important educational goals is the Provincial Learning Assessment Program (affectionately known in the education business as PLAP). While PLAP is designed to inform the Ministry of Education and the school districts about students' achievement, there is little evidence that the results of the PLAP tests are used directly and systematically in efforts to improve the education system (of course, there are some exceptions to this generalization and we know of some school districts that do use the PLAP results as part of their long term planning). The third widely used group testing program is the Grade 12 Provincial Exams. This program is clearly the one of the three with most influence on the lives of teachers and learners. (The next chapter describes these programs in more detail.)

Many people have described how group tests serve to restrict teaching and curriculum. It is undeniably the case that some goals of education can be adequately assessed by group tests and that some cannot. We will not reiterate those arguments here. What is quite clear is that, at least with existing technology used for these tests, the qualities that we believe are the most important (for example, autonomous and flexible thinking, moral responsibility, and creative problem solving) are very difficult if not impossible to test in the formats that are most frequently and economically used. The qualities that tend more often to be tested are important, but their scope is severely limited.

Beyond a doubt, the Grade 12 exams are very powerful determinants of the activities that take place in secondary schools. They also have a major impact on personnel decisions. For example, in one independent school we visited, we were told by a student that a first year teacher who was teaching Grade 12 biology was fired early in the fall semester. The reason why the teacher was released was because many students and parents complained that the teacher, while having the potential of becoming a good teacher, was not able to prepare the students properly for the provincial exams. These exams, which constitute 50% of the student's grade in the course, loomed larger than life in the eyes of these academically inclined youth and their parents. Another example comes from a district in the north, where we were told by a trustee that the district, as part of their professional development activities for teachers, would like to sponsor teacher exchanges with other districts. These exchanges would serve as opportunities for teachers in remote areas to teach in urban centres and gain more access to resources than they could in their rural communities. On the other hand, urban teachers would have the opportunity of spending a semester or year teaching in a dramatically different context with different types of students. Everyone would benefit. But would they? The biggest problem would be that it would be a unlikely that a school administrator would sanction an exchange involving a Grade 12 teacher if there were even the remote possibility that the incoming teacher was less capable than the departing teacher at preparing students for the exam.

We also have been told by parents, students, and teachers about the effect of provincial exams on instructional activities in classrooms. One effect is that as the time for the exam approaches, many if not most teachers begin to focus their teaching on the exam itself. What usually happens is that an extended drill and practice cycle begins, in which teachers cover what they believe to be the content on the exam (based on previous exams and the Ministry of Education's announcements concerning the specifications of the content on the exam). As much as 25% of the hours for the course can be devoted expressly to exam preparation. This is an ideal state of affairs for those teachers who believe that drill and practice are at the heart of learning. We do not. It is clear from our earlier discussion of learning that we think that drill and practice is not an adequate procedure for developing a foundation for the lifelong learning for which schools should be preparing young people.

In our view, the Grade 12 exams produce the exact opposite of what they are intended to produce. Rather than act as an instrument to raise the standards of performance of secondary school graduates, and presumably a corresponding increase in the quality of their learning, we believe that the Grade 12 exams have served to limit the scope of learning activities in which students participate and, most likely, homogenize their achievements. They also serve to increase extrinsic motivation to perform at school and reduce the chances that intrinsic motivation is at work. In addition

to all of this, these exams produce in many students what exams produce universally—anxiety. While throughout our lives we are expected to perform, and hence the anxiety to perform well could perhaps be considered one of life's less pleasant realities, it is also the case that the performance anxiety created by examinations is a breed apart and has little counterpart in any other endeavor besides school.

The Grade 12 exams should be eliminated entirely. Modifying the relative percentage of the Grade 12 mark to the teacher's grade or the provincial exam is of little consequence. If we want a mechanism for selecting students for post-secondary education, then we should create a mechanism to do that for students who wish to apply to these institutions. The development and implementation of post-secondary entrance exams is an appropriate job for the private sector in collaboration with the post-secondary institutions in the province, such as is done in the United States (for example, the testing programs provided by the Educational Testing Service). Another reason why exams are given is to respond to parents who want to be able to compare their child's performance to the performance of other children using as a measure something other than the teacher's grade. There is no reason why taxpayers' money should be used for this purpose. Again, the private sector is quite capable of providing testing services such as these for a reasonable fee.

A second impediment to change in the way teachers teach is the rigid age grouping that characterizes many schools. In most schools at both the elementary and secondary levels, there is an almost impenetrable boundary around age cohorts as they pass through school. Virtually the only way in which a child can move across this boundary is to fail a grade. In even rarer cases a child might be moved ahead one grade. This situation is much like the case in group testing, that is, just about the only social institution that practices such a rigid age grouping is schooling. Even in other educational activities for children, such as dance and music instruction that takes place in private, specialized schools or community sponsored agencies, there is far more flexibility in the way learners are grouped for instruction. For example, in dance instruction it is not uncommon to find in a ballet or jazz class children of a relatively wide age range, but having more similar levels of competence at the style of dance they are studying.

Age grouping of children for instruction is clearly a bureaucratic response to a very difficult problem: How does a system keep track of the hundreds of thousands of students in it? The answer is that the students are kept together in age cohorts, except in the most unusual situations. As a consequence, it is expected that the time it takes to learn something is the same for all learners. If it turns out not to be the same, which is what invariably happens over the course of 12 or 13 years of school, then the faster learners are slowed down and the slower students are left behind. In addition, the age cohort is maintained across the wide range of subjects taught in school. There is little opportunity for children with particular talent in an area to develop that talent more quickly or to a greater depth. We have been told this particular story many times by academically gifted students and their parents.

Just as in the exercise of accountability through group testing, the adherence to rigid age grouping as the primary mechanism for delivering the curriculum of the school has created its own contradiction. In the implicit debate between the need to insure the delivery of a common curriculum and the desire to foster high levels of achievement, the drive for consistency and uniformity has won the day over the more risky desire for individuality. This need not be the case. There is no logical reason why a common curriculum cannot be achieved at the same time that we foster individual excellence. The problem, as we view it, lies in using solutions to system management problems as solutions to educational problems. Of course, we are not alone in this problem, for it plagues almost every educational jurisdiction.

Much research over the last two or three decades has been devoted to the issue of time for instruction and a large number of innovations have been developed on the basis of this research. Whether it is the ungraded elementary school or mastery learning, what is common to these changes is the attention to time as a variable rather than a constant. That is, these programs are predicated on the assumption that it will take a different amount of time for different students to learn the same content. Rather than holding constant the amount of time to study a subject and letting the level of achievement vary, these programs attempt to reach a relatively constant minimum level of student achievement and let time vary.

Such programs are controversial and not without their critics. We are not advocating that one or another of these programs should be adopted by the schools of British Columbia. What is necessary, in our view, is far more local professional control over the way in which groups are created for instruction. By necessity, this will require more local

autonomy by education professionals over curriculum matters. Centralized control over curriculum and instruction, be it the Ministry of Education or the BCTF, will not result, in our minds, in the kinds of changes that we think are necessary. Without such autonomy, we think that centralized decision making will always result in less, rather than more exploration of alternative methods to teach our learners. The result of centralization will be more accountability and uniformity, but less experimentation and adjustment to local conditions.

What, then, should classroom teaching be like? If we are not advocating one particular teaching method, what are we advocating? It is clear from our discussion of learning that teaching needs to address what learners already know about the subject matter they are learning as well as the way in which they think about that information. Learning is creating, it is not receiving. Teaching methods must help learners create knowledge and understanding. This cannot be done effectively by treating learners as passive vessels to be filled with knowledge, but it can be done effectively by requiring learners to work hard and think deeply about the topics to be learned, and to take risks in their work. It means teaching students the strategies for thinking about problems and their solutions as much as teaching them the solutions. It means that teaching methods must require that students be active, that they must talk and work together, that they must *practise* both the mental and the physical requirements of the tasks they are to perform. It means that they must ask questions just as much as answer them. They must provide resources and help for others just as much as they use resources and help provided by others, and they need to work in cooperative environments just as much as they work in competitive environments.

Conclusions

The two examples of institutionalized impediments to change in education, group testing programs and age-grouping of classes, that we discussed here are but two among many. We have tried to show with these two examples that there is a fundamental conflict between the ideals that most people hold for education and the desire to achieve these ideals through centralized, mandated policies. This conflict is most evident in the way in which teachers teach. We have argued that we can enhance the quality of teaching in our schools by providing more autonomy to teachers and other professional educators, and by supporting their autonomy through local decision making about curriculum and through sustained in-service education. Unfortunately, the current popular wave of interest in education in North America is associated with a focus on centralized control mechanisms. While this emphasis might be responsive to the political environment, it will not serve to improve the quality of education provided for the learners of British Columbia. Rather, it will reduce the extent to which schools are able to adapt to the changes in our society that they serve.

Learning is an attempt to create meaning. It is an activity that is performed by individuals, yet it produces knowledge and understanding that is used in a social environment. For teaching to be successful, it needs to address these basic characteristics of learning. Teaching that is not based on what children already know and the way in which they pursue more knowledge will be far less than optimum. Teaching that ignores the social basis of how humans function will not result in learning that will contribute to the goals of education to which we subscribe. And teaching that is unresponsive to the motivating qualities that are enhanced by the learner's sense of control and autonomy is teaching that is coercive.

9. Standards and Accountability: Expectations of Learners and Schools

The subject of this chapter is the question of standards of pupil performance and the expectations held for the schools of British Columbia. Many of the components concerning these issues are matters of ideology and beliefs rather than matters of empirical data. Thus, these issues are complex and difficult to discuss simply and with clarity. However, issues concerning standards and expectations are important to the public, at least as indicated by the fact that 40% of the recommendations regarding the learner made in submissions to the Commission called for clearly defined goals of schooling, unambiguous standards, and systems to monitor pupil performance. The concern for these issues expressed in the submissions to the Commission are similar to the results of *Let's Talk About Schools*, which showed that 95% of the respondents agreed that achievement standards should be established for all forms of schooling. In that study, approximately half favoured Provincial standards, while national standards were preferred by one-third of the general public. A majority of the respondents indicated that standards should be established for all grades and that the best means of monitoring standards are Provincial examinations, especially at Grade 12. Finally, the Gallop poll reported in *Let's Talk About Schools* indicated that the community believes that standards and the quality of education in British Columbia have both declined in recent years.

To comment clearly and succinctly about standards, excellence, accountability, expectations, and evaluation is very difficult, because each of these terms is often used in a general, abstract way as part of the dialogue about school improvement and reform of education. Seldom is there an attempt to clearly define what excellence is or what the standards or expectations should be. We are simply told that standards should be high or realistic or appropriate, that we should strive for excellence, and that we should be held or hold others accountable. It is assumed that there is a shared understanding as to what is meant by the use of these terms.

Ask five different people to define excellence or to specify a set of standards, and the response will be five different answers. The fable about the five blind men groping for the elephant comes to mind. The only way that the five blind people could discover that they were touching an elephant was to share their perceptions. Thus it is with the determination of standards, the definition of excellence, the setting of expectations, and in a lesser but still significant way, evaluation of performance of a system as complex as is the school system of British Columbia. The blind men in British Columbia are the Ministry of Education (government), the educators, the parents, the public(s), and the pupils (learners). Each, of course, is a composite of many blind men. The perspectives and needs of each must be considered in the determination of standards, expectations, and systems of accountability, and in the definition of excellence. Each has certain responsibilities and roles to play in the realization of excellence once a clear definition has occurred.

Simply put, government sets goals, provides resources, and monitors the use of those resources as well as the outcomes with respect to the goals. Educators advise government and establish effective, efficient means by which the goals can be realized. Parents advise government and educators and they also assist with the education of their children. Publics choose governments and thus fund the systems that are established to meet the goals. Pupils, as the objects of the entire enterprise, participate, and their performance with respect to the goals is evaluated by the government, the educators, the publics and their parents. The outcomes of that evaluation are then used to decide whether or not excellence or some acceptable approximation of excellence is being achieved by the whole enterprise. Finally, all participants hold each other accountable and assign blame and, less often, credit to each other.

School systems that are strong and enjoy a sense of confidence and pride on the part of all participants are those for which there is clarity of purpose and of roles. The participants in these systems cooperate and collaborate. They are sensitive to each other's needs, they trust one another, and they avoid blame. Rather they accept their assigned responsibility, and they strive to constructively assist others to do the same. School systems that do not enjoy these attributes are systems in trouble. Such systems are perceived as declining in quality, even in the face of data that refutes such

perceptions, and all participants seek to defend their role, too often by suggesting that if others did their part, quality would again be realized.

To become strong again, such systems require leadership from their elected officials, a renewed sense of vision, a clarity of purpose, a sense of worth. Erosion of the perceived or actual quality of the school system must be of great concern to all, and steps must be taken to stop the erosion.

This paper considers first, the debate about excellence and equity; second, how educational standards appear to be established and maintained in the schools of British Columbia; third, current measures of student achievement and public opinion; and finally, potential improvements to current practices.

Excellence versus Equity

Excellence and equity are both goals that are declared for the education system of British Columbia. The issue is, of course, can we accomplish both?

To us, the arguments put forth with respect to the excellence versus equity controversy are obscure and problematic. One major argument seems to be that the degree of compatibility of excellence and equity is a question of resource allocation in that both require the expenditure of resources and resources are scarce. Thus, unless one of the goals (excellence or equity) is a by-product resulting from the pursuit of the other, society must choose between spending its education dollars on the education of those learners who require compensatory resources—that is the poor and the handicapped—or on those learners who will be our future leaders.

As judged by the results of *Let's Talk About Schools* and the recommendations contained in the submissions to the Commission, most people of British Columbia seems to want to avoid choosing between learners on this basis. Instead they seem to favour a system that would allow for both excellence and equity. They want all children to be given the support and instruction necessary to enable them to realize their full potential. They also want the students of British Columbia to achieve at a level that would be judged to be excellent using any standard of comparison. It seems, therefore, that the critical question is: "How to achieve both?" not "Which should we choose?"

Two conceptions of excellence seem to be relevant to this discussion. The first conception is that the determination of excellence is a matter of choosing between a system of testing and assessment and consequent instruction that is "norm-referenced" or based on competitive ranking, and a system of testing and assessment that is "criterion-referenced" or based on agreed upon competence indicators. The issue in the latter system is not how well one does relative to others, instead the issue is how competent is one in the area being assessed. Of course in the real world there is readily seen to be a mix of the two systems. Professional hockey players, for example, gain entry into the NHL by means of being better than their competitors, yet a minimum standard of competency must exist or the fans would not continue to consider the sport worthy of investment of time or money.

The competency system requires educators to invest in the learner whatever resources it takes to achieve the desired level of competency. Time becomes a variable and performance standards remain fixed for all. Theoretically all learners, given sufficient investment of resources, are able to achieve minimally set criteria. The competitive system, on the other hand, necessitates that educators offer all learners the same resources to develop their potential. What is important is that all learners are given equal opportunity. It is expected that given a fixed time period in which to achieve, the best learners will rise to the top, thus excellence is achieved. The competency system defines equity in terms of unequal distribution of resources according to need. The competitive system defines equity as equal distribution of resources and equal opportunity.

A second conception is that excellence has a great deal to do with how we see the purposes of education. One view is to consider education as an investment in the productive capacities of all individuals, and that through schooling we must gain and maintain superiority in the ability to compete in the world economy. Another view is to consider education as a means to ensure that all individuals acquire a minimum level of competency in those skills and knowledge areas that are essential to providing for full and meaningful participation as adults in our democratic society. In the

former view, the use of educational resources should be efficient and should result in the greatest good for the greatest number. In the latter view, the resources should be allocated unequally to ensure that those with the greatest need will attain the necessary skills to participate in the society.

The question of standards, then should be discussed in the context of conceptions such as those put forward above. Policy makers must exercise caution when they consider the question of setting or raising standards. The consequences of decisions with respect to excellence or equity should be thought out carefully and should be acceptable compromises between conflicting viewpoints. For example, if more math or science or a higher level of demonstrated competency in a subject is determined to be important, we should ask questions like these: What will the effect be on the drop-out rate or failure rate? Why should those who will not use math and science in their chosen careers need to know more about those subjects? Are the tasks being tested by the items on the test worth studying for or teaching to? We might find that some of the consequences of increased standards are increased drop-out rates, alienation of the academically untalented from learning, destroyed self-esteem, and learning just what will be on the tests (not to read, just reading skills; not to write, just to fill in blanks; not to think, just to give the right answers). If these effects occur, then some of the major goals of education such as the development of social morality, the development of the ability to participate in the democratic decision-making process, the creation of economically self-reliant adults, and the development of the ability to nurture a family and to raise children could well be sacrificed in favour of increased average test scores.

It is easy to see how equity could be sacrificed in the name of excellence. On the other hand, many people argue that excellence is often abandoned in the name of equity. It is argued from this stance that too many of our scarce resources are expended on learners who are not capable of high achievement. If the energies of teachers are sapped by children lacking the attributes necessary to learn from school, then opportunities which otherwise could be available to those students capable of achieving excellence may be lost.

Clearly, each of these two positions, in isolation, appear to be ridiculous. What is needed is a proper balance between what seem to be incompatible policies. In British Columbia, the compromise with respect to these conceptions of excellence appear to be complex and at times contradictory. There seems to be a belief on the part of most parents that all children have a right to schooling which assists them in the realization of their full potential. Circumstances of life, individual differences, and handicaps that tend to make it difficult for some learners to succeed in school must thus be overcome. A place, preferably in the normal classroom, must be made for all children—even those with handicaps or with deficits in what Coleman calls "social capital" (investments by parents, families, and society that enable the child to take advantage of what schools have to offer). Other segments of the public, however, seem more concerned with the detrimental effect the allocation of scarce resources will have on those children who have no handicaps or fewer deficits in social capital. Educators ask that their mandate be limited primarily to intellectual development and that other agencies be assigned the task of meeting the needs of the handicapped and of overcoming deficits in social capital. All want excellence. The compromise has been one of providing equality of opportunity by assuring a tuition-free place in the public school system for all children, by expending additional resources for those children with demonstrated need, by providing multiple options around a core of programs, and by adopting a system of testing and assessment that is both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced, that is, competition above a minimum standard appears to be the norm in the classrooms of British Columbia. Maintaining the proper balance is a constant challenge.

Setting and Maintaining Standards

The feature of the British Columbia School system that appears to have the largest role in shaping what is demanded in schools, and, therefore, what students can be expected to learn, is the curriculum—what is to be taught.

Central to the question of standards is the question: "What do we want for our children?" or "What is worth knowing and or doing?" Without first answering this question, assessment of the quality of schooling is impossible. In other words, curriculum designed to assist learners to achieve those goals thought to be of worth is a definer of standards. What is taught in school is the major determiner of what is learned, and therefore of educational standards. What is taught is a function of many influences and pressures.

The schools of British Columbia are expected to serve all learners: the advantaged, the disadvantaged, the handicapped, the New Canadians, the adherents of a variety of religions, the academically gifted and the slow and disabled. As we have indicated in Chapter 2 of this report, upwards of 93% of the school age population of British Columbia is enrolled in the public school system. Only independent schools at present have the right to exclude learners for reasons which include ability, handicap, religious affiliation, and economic status among others.

The public school system is expected to retain students who have difficulty with the prescribed curriculum by means of alternate instructional arrangements, modifications to the curriculum, and by allocation of additional resources to compensate for and overcome learning difficulties. Furthermore, as we have shown earlier, powerful demographic changes have resulted in an increase in the proportion of learners who come from families that are themselves not well acculturated to school demands. Increased immigration, changes to conventional family structures, an increase of the number of women in the workplace, and an increase in the proportion of the school enrolment that is disadvantaged have all been documented elsewhere in this report. The need to adapt the curriculum to this changing population is and will continue to be a major factor in the determination of expectations and standards.

Another major factor affecting the school curriculum has been a series of major structural changes in the work place. The shift in the nature of work has been great and will continue. Jobs for unskilled labour are changing dramatically. The proportion of jobs that are white-collar has grown from less than 10% at the turn of the century to close to 50% in the 1980s. Furthermore, credentials for entry into specific jobs have increased, and the spread of computer technology has had and is continuing to have profound influence.

One result of both of the above factors has been that society, through its policy makers, has turned to the schools to institute changes in the curriculum in response to the needs of society. Recent examples include the introduction of courses such as Consumer Education, Family Life Education, Computer Studies, and Pacific Rim Cultural Languages. At the same time, the requirements for secondary school graduation have been increased to include an additional year of mathematics, science, and a second language, plus there has been an increase in the number of prerequisites to entry into post-secondary institutions. In the midst of these patchwork changes to the curriculum, one major question has persisted. Should there be a common curriculum for everyone, or different programs for students with different abilities, interests, and goals? Related to this question has been a continuing discussion of the relationship of vocational subjects to liberal academic offerings.

To date in British Columbia, the official answer to these questions seems to be a compromise between contrasting positions. There should be a common elementary school curriculum for everyone. Differentiation in response to the abilities and interests of learners should be made by providing additional resources for the handicapped and, in the early years, for those learners who have difficulty achieving. In later years, individual differences are addressed by providing more limited extra assistance and greater choice from an increasing number of electives as schooling progresses. Thus in elementary school all learners will engage in a common curriculum, in the junior secondary years a common core of subjects will be required of all and the learner will have choice of a restricted number of electives, and at the senior secondary level, the required courses will be kept to a minimum and the learner will have a maximum number of choices by which specialization may occur. Choices among electives are to be made with a view to preferred options for post-secondary education or training. Thus career and course counselling is very important as children approach the end of the secondary years. The content of the common and elective curriculum is standardized throughout the province by means of prescribed and authorized learning materials in support of provincially defined course requirements.

While this brief overview suggests that the school curriculum is logically and coherently designed, areas of confusion still exist. First, schools are subjected to demands of their immediate communities, and at times by ministries other than the Ministry of Education, to add to the school curriculum courses or programs thought to be solution to social problems. Also, with respect to the core or common curriculum, there appears to be a wide variation in what is considered to be an acceptable prerequisite standard of performance for advancement to the next level in the curriculum. The time allotted to instruction given to the learner is fixed, and learners, with few exceptions, are passed on to the next level of curriculum offering with their age group. Demonstrated achievement levels present in any one class vary considerably and the degree of variation increases through the years. The same is true but to a lesser extent for elective courses in that students not performing above a certain minimum standard are advised by teachers and counsellors to opt for other elective areas.

In response to the ever-increasing spread in demonstrated achievement, teachers are pressed to adapt their approaches to teaching. Typically, elementary teachers respond by finding optional learning materials, usually reading material that is considered to be easier for slower learners to use. Thus, as one of the advisers to the Commission has pointed out, the curriculum for many learners is "dumbed." Secondary teachers, too, search for "easier" materials or "modified" courses but they often also add an organizational response such as developing a new timetable arrangement or creating alternate school structures. Seldom, however, do teachers at either level attempt to make changes in instructional strategies that will accommodate a wide range of performance levels. Thus, an unofficial differentiated, tracked or streamed curriculum arrangement has developed with the result that, even though our secondary schools are officially described as comprehensive secondary schools with a common curriculum to Grade 11, comprising a set of core subjects and a few electives, a typical school offers courses designated as modified or enriched, as well as regular courses. Students are also classified as being either academic or non-academic. Unfortunately the non-academic have also been labelled as vocational students, thus creating obstacles to suggestions that all students receive both intellectual and vocational development opportunities. The parallel development at the elementary level can been seen in the common procedure used of creating of three reading groups and two mathematics groups in each class.

Furthermore, in recent years the Ministry of Education has prescribed both an academic and a non-academic mathematics course (the division commencing at Grade 9) and a non-academic English curriculum at Grades 11 and 12. Thus an official differentiated curriculum has been established in many of the secondary schools of British Columbia. This development has been accompanied by requests, in the name of excellence, for similar developments in social studies and science, the other core areas of the secondary curriculum. Critics of such course differentiation rightly point out that equity in terms of equal access to knowledge and to future opportunities is sacrificed. Also, research evidence indicates that exclusion of lower achievers or pupils with lesser ability from normal classrooms results in a lowering of standards for those with less ability and does little to enhance the learning of those with higher ability (Meehan, 1983; Gamoran & Berends 1987). The issue of tracking or streaming is too important to leave to unofficial resolution. The Ministry of Education must develop and gain approval for a clear position on this matter and ensure that the official position is understood and upheld.

Finally, in the absence of Government direction, the Ministry of Education has identified on an interim basis four goals for schooling in British Columbia and six attributes that characterize a successful school system. The goals are: intellectual development, social development, vocational development, and human development. The attributes are: accessible, relevant, fiscally (sic) responsible, well-managed and accountable, professional, and meets public expectations. These goals and attributes have been used as a guide to curriculum revision teams, to assessment of schools, school districts and provincial programs, to the preparation of Ministry Annual reports, and to the determination of standards. Each of the goals and attributes is further defined by more specific statements. For example, Intellectual Development has three components: think independently, critically, creatively; possess reason, skills, and knowledge; and express curiosity for, and an appreciation of, learning. Also, Accessibility is defined as referring to the ability of the school district to offer programs that meet the needs of students, the ability of the school district to provide the opportunity and incentives for students to complete school to the appropriate level, and the ability of the school district to provide students access to all programs. An illusion of clarity of purpose is, therefore, provided. However, like the blind men referred to above, each of us would have differing definitions of terms such as "needs of students", "appropriate level", "access to all programs", and "appreciation of learning". While some may believe that the steps taken by the Ministry of Education are in the right direction, many more steps need to be taken before clarity about the issue of standards, equity, and excellence can be achieved.

Examinations and Assessments

A second element in the British Columbia school system that serves as an indicator of expectations and standards are Provincial Examinations and Provincial Assessment instruments. The examinations are designed to measure pupil performance on measures of the objectives of the prescribed curriculum, and the assessments include the gathering of data in addition to pupil performance. Both, however, measure only selected aspects of the school system. To draw conclusions from the data gathered about the entire school system with respect to all of its goals and attributes, therefore, is unwise unless such conclusions are based also on the perceptions of the other blind men groping around the elephant.

Tests and examinations have traditionally served as a major means of setting and maintaining educational standards. They do this by monitoring the performance of both educational institutions and the individual students in them. Appropriately used, they can motivate study and make clear to students and teachers alike what kinds of learning are expected in a given course of study. Cumulated across individuals, assessment results allow communities to judge whether schools as institutions are setting acceptable standards and helping students to meet them. Areas in need of improvement can be identified by comparisons across time and across institutions. However, a negative effect of examination programs, as we have argued in the previous chapter, is the tendency for teachers to restrict their teaching to the test specifications, thus neglecting those aspects of the curriculum that are not easily measured by the test items.

The prime difficulty with the use of tests and examinations or assessments to determine provincial standards has been the growing diversity of curricula and entrance requirements. The province authorizes six courses at the elementary level, nine courses at the junior secondary level, and approximately 150 courses at the senior secondary level. In addition to these authorized courses, schools, with permission of the local school board and subject to provincial regulations, may offer locally developed courses. For example, French as a second language, in which 30% of the elementary pupils are enrolled, is typically offered at the elementary level. As well, according to Ministry records 452 locally developed courses are currently being offered at the secondary level, although typically only a few are offered by a particular school. Estimates are that approximately 40% of the learners at the secondary level take a locally developed course. Such diversity has caused the Ministry of Education to be selective with respect to which courses will be monitored in an attempt to set and maintain standards.

Another difficulty of tests and examinations is that they stress competition of one student against another. Typically, classroom examinations are graded in a fashion that distributes grades on the basis of approximations to a normal curve. There is a role for the competition engendered by such grading practices, but unless teachers employ approaches to evaluation that stress competition with self in pursuit of excellence, grading practices could produce a pressure toward the average or mediocre. All learners can benefit from coaching and evaluative comments that point them towards improvement. A normative grading system that stresses relative rank can, and often does, result in situations where those students who a graded with C+ or better conclude that they have nothing more to learn. They are safe. Often, those students with a D grade or less are the only ones who are told to redo work. Many give up because they see themselves being punished for not succeeding. Grading practices that are solely based on ranking students foster a sense of the inevitable—that the role of evaluation is to sort and rank students rather than provide them with feedback about their learning. The learning situation would be enhanced if teachers provided all learners with evaluations designed to lead to improvement and which resulted in all students redoing work where appropriate to implement teachers' suggestions for improvement. It is our opinion that both evaluation systems have a place. Too often, however, only the competitive grading system is used with a detrimental effect on standards and the pursuit of excellence.

Measures of performance conducted by the province include Learning Assessments, International Mathematics Assessments, Grade 12 Provincial subject and scholarship exams, Secondary School Accreditations, and district profiles. Each of these programs is discussed below.

Learning Assessments, which are designed to assess the quality of a program, including standards of performance, are conducted on a four year cycle in four major areas: Language Arts (Reading and Composition), Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies. These assessments are conducted currently at Grades 4, 7, and 10 and are not designed as valid assessments of individual learners. Performance measures are designed to measure performance on curriculum objectives and they often include items chosen to permit historical analysis and comparison with other provinces and nations. Standards of performance are defined by panels of judges chosen from the teaching ranks and from the public. Standards comprise what the panel considers to be an acceptable performance level on test items and on the test as a whole. The expectations are based on what the panel believes to be reasonable given the nature of the learner and of the stated objectives of the curriculum. Levels of acceptable performance are determined prior to the scoring of the assessment tests. The actual results are then compared to the expectations held. A modification of the set of expectations may then be made, usually as a result of the data concerning the precision of the test items (reliability and item analysis data). The panel then rates the performance of the learners of British Columbia to be poor, marginal, satisfactory, very satisfactory, or strong. Also, a comparison is made with the results of the past assessments and with the performance of learners in other provinces and nations on those items that are common. Results of the assessments are provided at the school, district, and provincial level. District and school interpretation panels are established to judge the performance of local students and to compare those judgements with those of the provincial interpretation panel. Recom-

mendations for improvement are presented in reports resulting from the work of the interpretation panels at all three levels.

Conclusions drawn from the three most recent assessments are as follows.

Reading (1984): Clearly the current student population was judged to be meeting the widely held expectations for reading performance; the learners of British Columbia reported very positive attitudes towards reading.

Mathematics (1985): Attitudes of the learners was seen to be positive; the 1985 results were higher than in 1981 and 1977; performance was judged to be satisfactory or better for all objectives except problem solving where performance was judged to be marginal.

Science (1986): Contrary to popular misconception that standards of student performance has declined in science, the data based on this assessment indicates that student performance has improved; performance was judged to be satisfactory or better on most objectives.

During the 1980-81 school year, British Columbia participated in an international mathematics study. The goals of this study were to produce an international portrait of the teaching and learning of mathematics in 20 industrialized nations. Two areas reported in detail for British Columbia are a comparison of Grade 8 and 12 students' performance with performance of comparable students in the other countries, and a comparison of the curriculum requirements for British Columbia students with those for students in the other countries. Results indicate that Grade 8 students in British Columbia placed in the top third of the 20 participating countries, and "higher than students from any other English-speaking jurisdiction."(*The Second International Mathematics Study*, p. 57) However, learners in some of the other countries such as Japan perform much higher than do our Grade 8 students. The reasons appear to be related to differences in curriculum requirements, British Columbia having a more general, less focussed curriculum as compared to the Japanese curriculum which is places more emphasis on algebra and geometry.

At the Grade 12 level, British Columbia is distinctive in that almost 40% of its Grade 12 students take Algebra 12 whereas most other countries have only 5% to 10% of their students enrolled in similar courses. When comparisons are made for the top 1% and top 5% of the students in all of the participating countries, the Grade 12 students of British Columbia do as well as those in almost every other country. Therefore, viewed through one set of glasses it can be concluded that the British Columbia comprehensive system, by its openness, lack of selective examinations during the primary and lower secondary stages, and its high retention rate, is a more effective strategy for addressing all the talent of a province during mandatory schooling. Early selection—separation of students with high potential—is destined to produce good end-products, but this advantage is likely to be bought at the price of excluding many students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds who could benefit from universal access.

Provincial subject and scholarship examinations are administered in only 15 of the approximately 50 prescribed and authorized courses offered at the Grade 12 level. All but one of the 15 courses for which there are provincial exams are academic courses leading to university entrance. (The one exception is Communications 12 which is a non-academic English course; an English course at the Grade 12 level is required of all graduates.) This examination program illustrates how much influence British Columbia's post-secondary institutions have on secondary schools. According to Tomkins (1986), universities have promoted the use of examinations rather than select other options to deal with individual differences in the prerequisite competencies of potential students. Alternatives include providing introductory courses so that all students of sufficient ability can have access to post secondary programs, regardless of their specific backgrounds. Post-secondary educational institutions have also altered admission standards with seemingly little concern for the effect their requirements might have on the comprehensive secondary school curriculum. As Douglas Kenny, when president of the University of British Columbia, once stated, "the university meant to ensure that the high schools had a solid program" (Vancouver *Sun*, Feb. 2, 1980). When one considers the small percentage of secondary school students who eventually attend university in British Columbia, it is somewhat ironic that the universities think that they are in a position to dictate to the schools what their comprehensive programs should be like.

The provincial examination program was established in the 1983/84 school year. Examinations are prepared by committees of classroom teachers under the guidance of the Ministry's Curriculum Development Branch. The examinations are to reflect the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Tables of specifications for the examinations (these describe the content that is covered by each exam) are issued to all Grade 12 teachers at the beginning of the school year. All Grade 12 students enrolled in specified subjects must write the exams and their performance on the exam contributes 50% to the final grade given for that course. Examinations are scored by committees of teachers under the supervision of the Examination Branch. Raw percentage scores are weighted and cut points are determined by means of reasoned judgement. The reported scores, therefore, are not actual, unconverted test results.

Reports of the results include an item analysis by objective measured with recommendations for improvement. Results for individual students, item analyses, participation rates, school awarded marks, and composite marks with their corresponding letter grades are provided to the school, the district and the province. Provincial and district reports are made public. Funded Independent Schools also participate in the examination program. Their results, however, are not made public at any level. Most of the provincial examinations also have a one-hour scholarship component used to determine who will receive scholarship awards. These awards are given only to the top 2% of the Grade 12 enrolment.

Despite the controversy surrounding the introduction of these examinations, the majority of students, parents, teachers of Grade 12 subjects, and the public wish them to be continued. However, at issue in the eyes of people in many of these groups is the weighting given to a final examination based on one sitting, and the effect the examinations have on the classroom program. The public and the teachers, as indicated in the results of *Let's Talk About Schools*, desire the weight given to the Provincial Examinations to be less than 50%. An analysis of the issue conducted by the Student Assessment Branch concludes with the recommendation that the weighting be changed from the current 50% school—50% Provincial Examination determined mark to a 60% school—40% Provincial Examination determined mark. The reasons behind the recommendation seem to be that the professed goal of the Provincial Examination system would still be met, that is provision of a benchmark against which all students in the Province could be measured, and that there needs to be more recognition of the fact that the Provincial Examination does not measure all curriculum objectives, many of which are important but cannot be measured with a single paper-and-pencil test. Other goals of the tests such as screening students for university entrance and contributing to the evaluation of schools and teachers would also presumably be met.

While a move to modify the relative weightings of teacher-awarded marks and Provincial-Exam-awarded marks to the final course grade would be welcomed by learners and teachers, we believe that these arguments fall wide of the target. As we have argued in the previous chapter, the learners of British Columbia would be better served if the Provincial Exams were eliminated and other mechanisms developed to reach the goals stated for these exams.

The results of the Provincial Examinations since 1984 have remained relatively stable with respect to letter grade distribution. This is to be expected as cut-off points are designed to ensure that the distribution of letter grades and the failure rate are maintained at a level acceptable to the public. When one considers the issues of reliability and validity that must be addressed, the procedures followed are defensible. Variations at the district level and at the school level are more pronounced as they are more sensitive to changes in the nature of the learners from year to year and to changes in teaching staff and other environmental factors. Schools and districts appear to be interested in using the results of the examinations as part of their on-going search for improvement. This has been aided by recent changes in reporting results, which have provided schools and districts with participation rate data for the school, district, and the province as well as more detailed item analyses. However, the value for local school improvement is limited because the exams focus on only a few curriculum goals.

In a paper written by Jean Barman for the Commission on the topic of independent schools, it is stated that a common perception is that independent school pupils achieve higher scores on provincial examinations and assessments. An analysis of the 1987 examination data provided by the Ministry of Education indicates that the variability between examination results for independent schools is as great if not greater than as is the case for public schools. Also, analysis of the relationship between teacher awarded marks and examination results indicates that the variability between schools and the discrepancy between teacher awarded marks and examination results is greater for the independent schools than is the case for the public schools. Similar to the public school system, the variations between schools is considerable. Finally, non-funded, non-public schools and home school situations are not monitored, thus creating

the possibility of abuse. As one of the arguments in favour of the funding of independent schools is to provide consumer choice, it would be of service to the consumer if the results for the independent schools, like those of the public schools, were made public in an appropriate manner at each level.

Furthermore, any comparison between individual schools, be they public or private, must include consideration of the nature of the student body. For example, if an independent school has established entrance criteria that will exclude all but the learners who score in the top 10% to 15% on ability or achievement measures, then it is logical to assume that their students should achieve significantly higher scores on the provincial examinations which are keyed to a group of learners with a wider span of ability. It should be expected that a relatively larger percentage of the graduates of the exclusive school should qualify for a scholarship as the cut-off point is keyed to the top 2% of the Grade 12 enrolment. Claims by such a school must be interpreted in that light. Similarly, if pupils from two public schools appear to be similar in achievement or ability, one would expect the results on examinations to be similar. If, however, in one school only 35% of the Grade 12 enrolment writes the examination in question and 70% of the enrolment of the other school writes the same exam, one would expect the more restrictive school to achieve a higher average exam score. An analysis of the examination results of any district would indicate that variability does exist, but that to draw conclusions without consideration of the complexities that might underlie the variability would be indefensible.

School Accreditations are required of all public secondary schools enrolling Grade 12 students and of funded independent schools. The process involves an internal review followed by a review of an external team. As a result of the review, schools are awarded up to six years of time before another accreditation is required. The emphasis in the process is to encourage self-appraisal and to identify strengths as well as perceived weaknesses. The process is currently under revision and according to a recent Ministry announcement will be tied more closely to the four goals and six attributes established by the Ministry as noted above. Also greater emphasis will be given to the development of school improvement plans derived from the systematic collection, monitoring and evaluation of data. Hopefully any changes made in this direction will be received as positive contributions to the continuing search by dedicated teachers for improvement and not as a bureaucratic control device imposed by the Ministry of Education. We have examined a draft of the proposed revised accreditation booklet and have concerns that its use of Likert rating scales, and a format that requires little synthesis and evaluative conclusions on the part of the school staff, will not be an improvement. Also, the use of the four goals and six attributes mentioned above as organizers for the assessment document results, in our view, in constrained and at times misplaced emphasis. To us many of the indicators have something to say about more than one goal or attribute. It would be better, therefore, if schools were encouraged to synthesize their findings into self-evaluative statements and if the connection of indicators to goals and attributes were left to the judgement of the schools.

In the pilot stage is a new approach developed by the Ministry of Education's program effectiveness branch designed to assist schools and districts to establish and maintain standards. This approach is termed the Information Profile System. The purpose of the approach is to provide districts and schools with information that is on file with the Ministry that will enable the districts and schools to make meaningful comparisons with other similar schools, districts or the province as a whole. The avowed purpose of the approach is to assist districts with self-improvement plans and to provide baseline data and consultative advice that will enable reasoned judgements. The system involves the collation of data that has arisen from assessments and provincial examinations as well as census data that is considered to be of worth to education related decisions. Districts are provided with a standard format based on the four goals and six attributes referred to earlier. Data is provided for each school in the district, the district as a whole, for a cluster of districts in the province that appear to have similar demographic characteristics as the district, and for the province as a whole. Data that would be relevant for many of the goals and attributes are not available from the Ministry, but districts are encouraged to develop their own public and parent opinionaires and to gather data from individual school and district records. Districts are also encouraged to prepare reports for their community based on the comparative data and to file their reports with the Ministry. The positive potential of such a system is very great. It is hoped that should a new set of goals for the British Columbia school system be adopted, the approach will be continued and further refined.

Conclusion

There appears to be ample evidence that the schools of British Columbia have been able, until recently, to adopt acceptable compromises to what seem to be dichotomous issues related to a choice between concerns for the alienation of youth, the lack of diversity in the educational system, the need for all learners to have certain basic competencies, the need to develop citizenship, and the need to be assisted with the transition to adulthood versus concerns with the efficient use of resources based on a utilitarian model and the sorting and ranking of learners by means of competition. The ever present dilemma as to how to provide for both equity and excellence and the related debate about standards appear to be prominent once again.

Mass secondary education, the need to provide a place for all learners, a greater diversity of course offerings, a scarcity of resources, and rising teacher militancy and instability have resulted in perceived disparities in achievement that have led to a renewed interest in restoring uniform standards. However, the growing diversity of entrance requirements of post-secondary institutions (access to which every pupil aspires even though fewer than 30% proceed into these institutions) have been imposed on secondary schools to the degree that the schools can no longer provide a common sequential background of preparation for further studies. Assessment programs serving both instructional improvement and political purposes and demonstrating that the Ministry of Education has a concern for maintaining some degree of uniformity of standards have been developed and refined. Despite results that indicate there is a general level of satisfaction with academic standards, and that standards on selected measures have not declined, there is a call for higher and more uniform standards across local school systems and the province. Also students are constrained to emphasize the hard sciences as well as English and Math to ensure that all doors to future education are kept open. Students are, therefore, reinforced in their conviction that vocational, cultural, and recreational subjects are not worthy studies.

One other factor which likely has significant influence on the ability of learners to take full advantage of their schooling and thus influences standards is the use of time available to the learner out of school. As has been shown in other chapters of this report on the learner, the students of British Columbia lead very busy lives, in which school does not always have a significant place. In a recent survey of an urban secondary school, about 40% of the students indicated that they held part-time jobs and 2% indicated that they held full-time jobs. The majority of these students were in Grades 10, 11, and 12. The percentage of students engaged in work out of school hours in the senior grades, therefore, is likely to be much higher than 40%.

Also, our extensive interviews of 63 pupils in Grades 3 to 12 and attending both public and independent schools, and their parents, indicate that typically the learners of British Columbia are not highly-motivated to work at what they do not like. If they think a course is irrelevant to their goals, or if they feel a lack of rapport with the teacher, they do not strive. They seem to view school work as an end in itself, rather than as a means to an end, even though several of them express platitudes about school preparing one for life, work, and a better future. The present seems too dominant for them to overlook it in the interests of future rewards.

By and large these pupils, despite their differing records of school achievement and future aspirations, convey the message that there is not sufficient challenge in the tasks they are asked to take on by their teachers. By this, they seem to mean both that they find the tasks irrelevant to their lives and that the nature of the learning and teaching activities fails to stir them to have a greater interest. They comment that there is too much "copy work" and that the teacher "goes on and on," and that the work does not require that they really apply themselves in a challenging way.

Yet many of these learners have deep, captivating interests in other areas such as music or sports, some having worked at these vocations for several hours a day for several years. It seems then, that these learners are capable of applying themselves to those learning activities for which they see a direct relationship between the activity and some personal aspiration. School does not seem to occupy a central place in the learner's life, rather it is something one has to fit into otherwise very busy lives. These findings are, of course, generalizations for which there are many exceptions as most of the learners interviewed did cite instances where they were caught up in their learning, usually as a result of a closer match between the tasks assigned at school and a personal interest, or because a particular teacher had captured their interest by some instructional method. With respect to methods of instruction, we have noted that methods which cause students to become heavily involved in their learning and which foster life long learning rather than simply competition for grades or completion of course requirements are seldom used.

The solutions to complex problem concerning our expectations for our schools and the standards that they achieve cannot be simple. These solutions must attend to many masters. They must be able to provide a useful tool for the improvement of learning and teaching, provide a gate-keeping function, serve political agendas, provide information useful to school improvement efforts, and gain the confidence of the parents and community. The Ministry's information profile has considerable promise. An elimination of the provincial examinations, an emphasis on classroom practices that use criterion-referenced evaluation, and the engagement of learners in such a way that they take the major responsibility for their learning would also help to restore confidence in the school system. Also, expression of faith and confidence in the public school system (which does and will continue to serve the majority of the pupils of British Columbia) and acknowledgement of the positive performance measures that have been gathered to date by the Government of the day will do much to restore confidence. Finally, reform of the nature of the curriculum so that there is value ascribed to non-academic pursuits and so that the universities do not exclude unfairly pupils who reside in small communities will also assist in this mission. The first order of business, however, must be the clear determination of the goals and attributes of the school system of British Columbia.

10. Suggestions

Crafting suggestions for consideration by the Commission is a difficult process. Beginning with our own professional experience and knowledge, we met with informed educators and with the public, we visited schools and other agencies, and we read hundreds of articles, reports, and books. We have learned much. In the end, one still is left with the decision about what strategy to employ to formulate and report specific suggestions. Rather than overwhelm the Commission and our readers with long and detailed lists, we decided to present a short list of rather broad topics for attention. There are many other suggestions throughout this report that can be used to expand upon and make our short list more concrete.

Our work was undertaken from the point of view of the learner, not from the point of view of the teacher, parents, administrators, the public, or other important actors in the educational system of British Columbia. We began our work by drafting key questions based on several premises to guide our work. Also, prior to commencing our investigations, we identified basic assumptions about the learner that we held. As our work progressed, we returned to our initial questions and list of assumptions for the purposes of refinement, affirmation, and amendments in the light of our findings.

First, we presumed that the questions we posed would influence and be influenced by the work of the other five Commission research teams. We believe this presumption to have been correct. For example, our discussion of the nature of learning has relevance to the work undertaken by the curriculum group. Also, the results of our interviews of learners with differing backgrounds and from a variety of school settings relate to the deliberations of other research groups concerned with teacher education and the relationship of schools to society.

Second, we presumed that educational development occurs throughout the life span of the learner. Becoming educated is not something that happens only during the ages normally spanned by the K-12 period. Learners come to Kindergarten with about five years of experience and they leave school, usually in late adolescence, with 60 or more years left in their lives. We believed it to be inappropriate to examine the role of schooling in British Columbia without reference to this developmental context.

Our third premise, related to the second, was that the educational development of the person occurs in the context of many social institutions and informal settings. While it is trite to say that many things in modern society influence children and youth, it is also profound. We believed it would be foolhardy for the Commission to ignore the powerful influences that other institutions and settings have on individual development. From television, radio, and other mass media, to family, church and organized sports, children and youth are presented with an enormous range of opportunities in which to learn. Many of the achievements that result from these influences complement and enhance the goals of schools, but many are in conflict with the mission of educational institutions.

Last, all of our questions possess an historical context. In order to plan for the future, we believed it was necessary to look to the past. This premise relates more to some of our questions than to others, yet we believed that an historical view would enable us to make realistic recommendations for the next quarter century and beyond.

The questions posed and the assumptions held by us are presented in the following lists.

Assumptions About the Learner

1. A highly educated public serves the common good.

2. The state has an obligation to ensure that all children have access to free, non-sectarian basic education. Basic education is to be defined by the lay public or its representatives.

Parents must ensure that their children engage in basic education or its equivalent.
Parents must ensure the state that their children have access to the state's basic education.

3. The school is the basic unit of education.
   Schools and all their components are primarily for provision of basic education for learners.
   Basic education should be common to all.
   Unequal distribution of resources to ensure equal opportunity is necessary.

4. The learner has the right to pursue individual interests beyond basic education.
   All learners must be helped to learn how to learn.
   To ensure the rights of the learner, financial restraints should be minimized, and quality care should be provided.

5. The evaluation system(s) used by the schools affect(s) the learner's approach to learning.
   Evaluation should encourage provision of specific information designed to foster improvement.
   Evaluation systems which simply sort and rank should be de-emphasized.

6. The learner is an active participant in the schooling process and has the responsibility for his or her own education.
   Learning is hard work. While learning can be enjoyable, to imply that learning should be effortless is to do a disservice to the learner.
   Individual differences are best met through the provision of options to the learner.
   Schools should be viewed as agencies that assist learners to attain an education. Learners should use schools as they achieve an education, not take full direction from them.
   Beyond the primary years, grouping of learners should be based on competence or achievement rather than on age-grade criteria.
   Learners should be able to develop themselves on a "broken front," that is, to accelerate in areas of strength and go more slowly in areas of weakness.

7. Learners, once they have acquired the basic education, should pursue interests in a variety of institutions, only one of which may be the comprehensive senior secondary school as it now exists.
   All learners should be guaranteed a minimum number of years of free education beyond the basic education.
   Learners should be able to interrupt their education after they have met the basic requirements and return at any time in their later lives.

The Learner: Guiding Questions

1. Who are the learners of British Columbia? What are their family circumstances with respect to ethnicity, language of the home, family income, and family support? What do we know about their mobility, their aspirations, their use of time? How do they value education?

2. What should be the goals of education? What does it mean to be educated? What are the goals of the school system of British Columbia? What role should the schools play in the development of the person?

3. What are the fundamental skills that learners need in order to become educated? Should the goals be the same for all learners? What should be the mandate of the schools?

4. What is the ideal social contract or compact between the learner and the society? What are the rights and responsibilities of learners? What are the rights and responsibilities of society to learners?

5. What do we expect of learners? What are the appropriate standards? How should these standards be determined? What is the performance of the learners of British Columbia? What kinds and level of performance should we expect? Should we expect the same from all learners?

6. How do people learn? Do all people learn in the same way? What special needs are there that influence the way people learn? What implications are there for the answers to these questions to curriculum, methods of instruction, and evaluation of learners?

7. What are the appropriate conditions for learning to meet the goals of education under the constraints and possibilities derived from all of the above questions?

Our work included formal visits to ten schools where we interviewed 63 students and their parents; informal visits to many more schools and discussions with numerous students, teachers, counsellors, and principals; attendance at public hearings and subsequent reading of submissions made to the Commission to determine what presenters had to say and recommend about the learner; interviews of key players in the school system of British Columbia; analysis of data and documents provided, at our request, from the Ministry of Education; a review of pertinent literature and research findings; and consultation with experts and special interest groups concerned with the needs of learners. In all instances, we found people to be genuinely interested in the work of the Commission. They responded to our questions candidly and openly. They, like us, saw much about the current school system that is to be lauded and admired. Also like us, they would like to see improvements made to the present situation. Their contribution and cooperation is gratefully acknowledged.

Major Issues and Themes

As our work progressed, six major issues regarding the learner emerged. These issues cut across the questions we used to gather and organize our findings, and examples of each may be found in the various sections of this report. Following a brief discussion of these issues, we present our suggestions to the Commission. These are written at a general level. They do not specify concrete action to be taken immediately. We prefer that the reader spend the time to read all of our report, in which we discuss the justifications for these comments. Each reader will, no doubt, arrive at somewhat different interpretations of the issues and the data that we present. Thus, rather than present definitive conclusions, our goal is to provoke discussion and debate about this most critical of all social institutions—education.

The first issue concerns the provision of comprehensive health and social services to children in British Columbia. Most educators are calling for a clear mandate for schools. Usually this means that they wish to be held accountable only for the educational and socialization functions of schools and that health and social service functions be the responsibility of other agencies. The problem comes when these educators are asked what to do about children who, in their eyes, are in need of additional social services in order to take advantage of the educational services provided by schools. Unfortunately, many of these children, although clearly suffering problems which impede their educational progress, are considered not to be in a crisis situation by social service and health agencies who perceive their mandate as being limited to crisis situations. However, no one wants to give up on the children. The major issue now is how can more comprehensive social services be provided for needy children without adding a fiscal burden to school budgets and at the same time addressing the very real issues concerning professional and bureaucratic turf protection.

Suggestion One

In order to enhance the education of youth, there is need to redefine the social compact between the state and the child in British Columbia. Such definition will require deliberate public debate about rights and responsibilities. Models for service delivery, such as those found in the reports to the Commission by the community working groups concerned with the role parents in education and with pre-school care and early childhood education should be considered. Regardless of the particular approach that is eventually taken on these issues, it is the government which must lead this debate.

The second issue, which has many ramifications, concerns the provision of choice to the learner. Conflict exists between the pressure for individual choice that reflects the pluralism of modern Canada and the need for a comprehensive public school system to create and maintain a sense of community. Independent schools provide options based on differing value perspectives while public schools enable social cohesion to be developed and maintained.

Conflicts regarding choice are frequently couched in terms of the demands of families versus the requirements of schools. But the choices of parents are not always accepted by children, particularly as they age. Policies regarding choice must protect the interests of children independently from the interests of parents, particularly when parent and child are in conflict. Furthermore, parents who choose to educate their children by means other than enrolling them in schools that are supervised by the Ministry of Education should be held accountable for the education that these children receive.

Finally, with respect to choice, the secondary curriculum needs to address the wide range of needs and interests of adolescents.The current distinction between vocational and academic tracks is an inappropriate and misleading categorization. The critical issue is related to the lives of young adults after they leave high school. Virtually everyone in society expects that all adults will lead economically productive and independent lives. Thus the vocational preparation that all adolescents receive needs to be considered. The current secondary curriculum is far too heavily wieghted toward university entrance. Those learners who choose other options consider themselves, and are perceived by others, to have failed at their efforts to succeed at an academically oriented curriculum. Courses other than those named as prerequisites by the universities are considered to be of less worth. Because fewer than 30% of the learners attempt university and fewer than 20% of the learners succeed in obtaining a degree, such distinctions are detrimental to the majority of learners.

Suggestion Two

> *British Columbia requires a common core curriculum designed to cultivate the minds of all students. This curriculum needs to be developed in association with instructional practices that will help achieve this goal. The elementary years should provide the basic capabilities in literacy and numeracy so that children can succeed at the common curriculum. The common curriculum should be required over the period currently devoted to the junior secondary years. All students should be required to take these courses in a non-age graded system. We believe that the rigid use of age-grading in schools constitutes a serious limitation to innovation and to opportunities for the individual development of learners. Upon successful completion of the common curriculum, students should select a specialized curriculum oriented toward the immediate post-secondary years. For some, this curriculum will be oriented toward further academic preparation at a college or university. For others, the senior secondary years will be oriented toward specific vocational preparation. These courses of study will be developed and delivered collaboratively by schools, unions, and employers. Admission to either of the senior secondary programs should be based on successful completion of the common curriculum. It should not be based on grades or any other predetermined sorting mechanism.*

The third issue concerns views of learning, and teaching in support of learning. Views of learning that are held by many educators in the schools of British Columbia are outdated. There is growing evidence, in fact almost universal acceptance, of the view of mind that places more reliance on the individual as a constructor of meaning than as a vessel into which to pour information. This constructivist approach to mind marks a dramatic departure from earlier approaches that were concerned either with the development of mental faculties or behavioural training. Teaching and instruction needs to reflect this change in philosophy of mind. As well, instructional practices need to reflect other changes in educational thought. In particular, the place of instructional models other than direct instruction, lecture, and recitation needs to be promoted.

There are a number of additional issues related to views of learning. First is the issue of class size. Alternatives to reductions in class size must be implemented. Use of differentiated staffing, new technology, cooperative learning models, peer tutoring, independent studies, and access to learning institutions other than traditional schools are worth exploring. Second is the issue of how to guarantee the acquisition of basic skills fundamental to further learning. The primary and elementary school mandate needs to be defined in such a way that basic skills are acquired. Enrichment and exploration should take place in this context. Third, provision should be made for a sandwiching of work with school-

ing. The learner who does not choose to pursue academic studies and who chooses to leave the school should have other options and should not be stigmatized. Last is the issue of evaluation and the effects on learning of the current system of normative, competitive grading practices. Such systems serve political purposes and function as a mechanism for screening for selection. They are not conducive to enhanced learning. A proper balance is required between these systems and systems which emphasize provision of guidance and direction leading to improved performance.

Suggestion Three

Teaching needs to address what learners already know about the subject matter they are learning as well as the way in which they think about that information. Learning is creating, it is not receiving. Teaching methods must help learners create knowledge and understanding. This cannot be done effectively by treating learners as passive vessels to be filled with knowledge, but it can be done effectively by requiring learners to work hard and think deeply about the topics to be learned, and to take risks in their work. It means teaching students the strategies for thinking about problems and their solutions as much as teaching them the solutions. It means that teaching methods must require that students be active, that they must talk and work together, that they must practise both the mental and the physical requirements of the tasks they are to perform. It means that they must ask questions just as much as answer them. They must provide resources and help for others just as much as they use resources and help provided by others, and they need to work in cooperative environments just as much as they work in competitive environments.

Fourth is the issue of standards. The evidence seems to indicate that the performance of the learners of British Columbia on selected measures over time, as judged by panels of educators and non-educators, compares well to other jurisdictions and that standards are not falling. Also, in the opinion of the judges, standards are satisfactory or better in most areas that have been measured. Yet, the public expresses a belief that standards are falling. Furthermore, the school does not appear to have a significant place in the lives of the learners who were interviewed. Certain programs mean a great deal to students, but overall they place schooling on a lower priority than what society might expect. How to bring about a change in valuing and priority without simply adding to the curriculum is the issue. Questions of organization, evaluation, homework, learning models, family expectations, and use of time are all relevant, as is the question of diversity. Should there be a common standard for all, or should there be a set of criteria which will be used to determine whether or not learners are being challenged? How does society compromise between the desire for excellence and the need to provide equity of access to knowledge and learning opportunities?

Suggestion Four

The solutions to complex problems concerning our expectations for our schools and the standards that they achieve cannot be simple. These solutions must attend to many masters. They must be able to provide a useful tool for the improvement of learning and teaching, provide a gate-keeping function, serve political agendas, provide information useful to school improvement efforts, and gain the confidence of the parents and community. The Ministry's information profile has considerable promise. An elimination of the provincial grade 12 examinations, an emphasis on classroom practices that use criterion-referenced evaluation, and the engagement of learners in such a way that they take the major responsibility for their learning would also help to restore confidence in the school system. Also, expression of faith and confidence in the public school system (which does and will continue to serve the majority of the pupils of British Columbia) and acknowledgement of the positive performance measures that have been gathered to date by the Government of the day will do much to restore confidence.

A fifth issue that emerged concerns the plight of those learners with special needs. The demands for "least restrictive environments" and opportunities to realize "full potential" for children with special needs place new pressures on schools. What are the effects of integrating the handicapped into regular schools and classrooms? What is the empirical base in support of the movement towards full integration? In particular, first, the gifted learner seems to require more resources and attention. Concern is with all levels of schooling, but especially with the secondary schools. Identification, funding, provision of a continuum of program options, and quality instruction have been identified as concerns. Second, those learners with learning disabilities are not well served by the present system. On the surface the

issues seem to ones of definition and early identification. However, provision of truly effective programs for these learners seems more fundamental. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the approaches currently used is in order.

Next, non-academic (those who are not bound for college or university)learners perceive themselves as being of less worth than are the academic students. Few children enter non-academic programs by choice. They fail into these programs. A large number of non-academic students leave school without success and with little of relevance to their life's work. The resources of society are provided in greater measure to those who remain in school and who enrol in academic courses leading to the university. Yet, non-academic learners need, even more so than do the college- or university-bound, a sound, general education that will equip them to learn and to participate fully in society. Early specialization for any learner would be a mistake. All learners require both vocational and academic education. Last, with respect to special needs, is the issue as to whether or not enough investment is being made by society to support learners who are new Canadians, and learners who are disadvantaged —both culturally and economically. Assuming that more investment is required so that these learners can take advantage of what schools have to offer, how can society best make such an investment? How can the sanctity of the family be upheld while guaranteeing the rights of the learner? Provision of child care, preschool and parent education programs are considerations.

Suggestion Five

Over the last two decades British Columbia has made great strides in the provision of extra assistance to special needs learners. The policy of providing this extra assistance should be continued. Focus for the future should be toward providing educational support services for both learners and teachers in normalized settings. Where necessary, special needs learners and their families should receive extended services designed to provide the learner with the necessary capabilities to success in school. Particular attention should be given to programs for Native, English as a Second Language, and the Severely Learning Disabled pupils.

The last issue to emerge concerns matters related to rights and responsibilities. All actors who play a role in the education of children have rights and responsibilities. They include professional educators and families. Pupils have mandatory access to education, but they also have responsibilities to perform in order to secure and maintain this access. Parents express a sense of powerlessness, and learners appear to have no legislated rights, at least as reflected in the School Act and its Regulations. Interpretation of the Canadian Charter of Rights will likely define rights of the learner.

Parents cite instances where they have been stonewalled by the system. They want to know what their rights are and to whom they can turn when things do not go as they feel they should have gone. The natural tension between the home which sees all things from the perspective of looking after a child"s individual needs, and the school, which sees all things from the perspective of the child's responsibilities to the group is at issue. How can parents be given a sense of fairness in this natural struggle without placing the school in a position of powerlessness? Finally, and perhaps more important, who will be the advocate of the learner when conflict arises?

Suggestion Six

We believe that carefully thought out changes to the British Columbia School Act and its regulations are needed to bring about desired and proper changes to school practices so that they reflect "chartered" rights. To us, legislated change is a better way to address those concerns that have merit than are rulings resulting from costly court proceedings. We believe that it is far better to allow, indeed to require protagonists in a controversy to settle their dispute among themselves at a local level. Dispute resolution should include clearly specified opportunities for appeal to dispassionate but interested parties. Turning to the courts for resolution of important educational questions might have to occur at times, but only in rare circumstances. We prefer not to run the risk of resolving disputes by appeal to procedural technicalities rather than substance. Consideration should be given to the establishment by legislation of a third party conflict resolution procedure for education, perhaps through the provision of an Ombudsman for children, and of clarification of the mandate and authority of the various agencies which serve the children of British Columbia.

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